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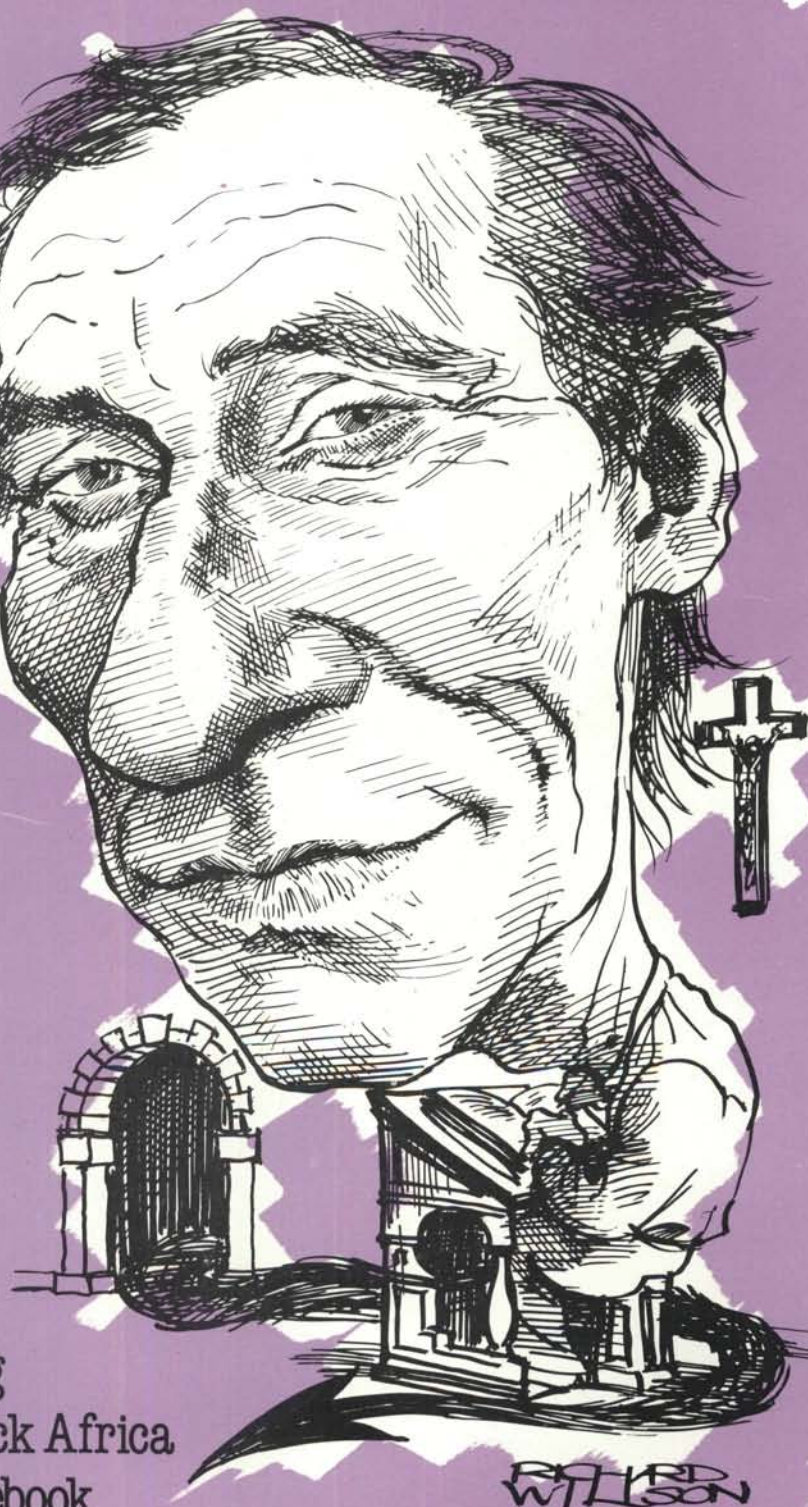
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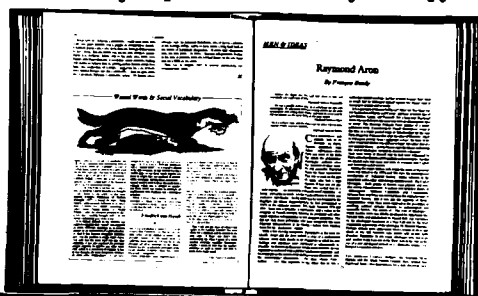
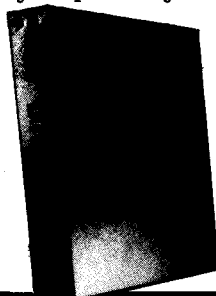
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[EN 6]

Philip Sidney Jennings

The Copy Cats

HER FRIENDS surprised me. With the exception of Angus, they all had ragged beards. Angus had a permanent groove like an exclamation mark between the domes of his forehead which gave the impression that his left side and his right had joined forces to make this one sure furrow of concentration and self-definition. Adele's eyes were young, sparkling and expectant. I avoided them as much as possible in company. We were infrequent secret lovers.

"There's a late-night Greta Garbo film on tonight", Adele said.

"Isn't she divine", Angus exclaimed. "I've been in love with her for years."

I couldn't remember what Greta Garbo looked like. I wondered if Angus had been in love with Adele for years and considered her divine, another infrequent secret lover?

Angus was a merchant sailor who spoke with an upper-class accent. The nail in his forehead held it firmly and permanently together. What an effort it must have been in the early stages!

Jim, his friend, had a ragged beard and wild eyes. He kept on telling sea-stories which drove me to unknown heights of generosity as I rushed to the bar to buy a round of drinks to escape these tedious tales which were always a mixture of booze and sea and broken-down discipline. It was amazing: when I came back loaded with glasses, Jim was still going on. If there was a pause for sips, sighs and thanks, it was soon filled by Jim taking up where he had left off. I had no chance to drive a wedge in, perhaps no wedge.

"... So there they all were, all these German tourists pouring on to the ship and there was little Cosgrove flat on his back, glasses on one side, bellowing at the top of his voice: step lively you landlubbers. . . ."

Angus had no doubt heard or experienced this story before but in no way did this prevent or block his laughter from being hard, fast and concentrated. Jim roared like a sea full of madness.

I took a quick glance at Adele. Her fringe was getting longer. Her eyes were becoming more difficult to see. I got the impression she was hiding and peeping, peering from beneath a curtain and behind it was a theatre where her hidden players strutted and fretted until the beery curfew tolled.

"Has anybody got a pen and paper?"

I had writer's block so of course I carried pen and

paper around with me like a medical prescription. I passed them to her.

"Powder puff and lipstick."

A quick smile and she began writing at once.

"Must get this down before I forget it", she said, acknowledging perhaps too swiftly a world that might not be understood.

Jim said, "Oh I see!" and raised his eyebrows like a comedian whose name I've forgotten. Angus cleared his throat in a careful dry way.

"She often does this. You don't do it, do you, Paul?"

He made the activity sound like pissing in the street or something a little bit obscene or perverted. Of course he was joking. He was Adele's old friend. I was the newcomer.

"Once I did it at a party", I said, "and a woman told me to stop because it was impolite and like having a human tape-recorder in the room. I told her we all have ears and a memory, and she could choose to be flattered by my attentions if she wished. Unfortunately she wasn't."

Jim gave a guffaw which I was almost grateful for because this was the most I'd said all evening and I hadn't been able to laugh at his stories. They rolled me over and flattened me like a steamroller so that I was left with nothing to respond with. When I didn't laugh, I felt guilty and inadequate, and there was always the danger that my true feelings about him might become visible. For Adele it was all copy. I envied her. How could she not enjoy life when all was copy!

"Is that how you write then, you just write down what other people say? That doesn't seem fair." Jim's question and reaction.

"No, no", chimed Angus gleefully, "not at all, not fair. Explain yourself, Andrews."

"Now come on", Adele Andrews reasoned, "we all borrow from each other. I mean how do you think we know anything at all?"

"Avast there ye scum, ah Jim lad, polish me crutch!"

"I've already written that down", Adele smiled.

Mmm, I thought, the literal truth is sometimes wit.

She left the pen and paper on the table in front of her. She didn't mind at all if you read what she had written. Once I asked her: "What do you do with all these snippets of dialogue?" It was dialogue she usually wrote down, rarely description. She became confident and explanatory; gestures accompanied her words.

"I put them all together, then I jumble them up and work them together in a collage."

"I don't see what holds them together apart from the paste?"

Adele explained cheerfully that it was a famous technique used by several illustrious writers.

"They were just jotting down between hangovers and fixes", I offered, "they couldn't sustain a long flow of words."

"Oh no", she assured me, and gave me that common little put-down line: "It's not as simple as that."

We left that there, another fragment, possibly recorded, possibly not, the smallest touch of swords between us.

The glasses were full. I looked anxiously up and down the pub. Jim was revving up again: "'member that time in Singapore?"

I WANTED TO WEEP, to weep, not to cry, that was much too ordinary. I looked attentive and stopped listening. I'd chosen to meet Adele in the pub, one of our infrequent meetings which took place when her second husband, Joshua, went to Scotland to track down his children and row ferociously with his ex-wife. An hour before we were scheduled to meet she'd phoned me at home. Naturally I was in the dense centre of my writer's block, an unpleasant place to be. Her words brought me little cheer:

"Two old friends, sailors from the sea, I don't get to see them often. We'll have a quick drink and leave."

We never had enough time together, Adele and I. She always had to get home for her teenagers. Another day or two and Joshua and his trumpet would be back, muted and miserable as sin and making Adele miserable, and she—by way of quick phone calls here and there in the day—telling me all about it.

Her second husband Joshua surprised me too. He was young, bearded, handsome and disillusioned. He was full of noise and beer and jokes. His mind was alert and despairing. Sometimes he behaved like a child and blazed at Adele so that I didn't want to be with them and wished I was elsewhere. At other times, when the three of us had somehow conspired to be in the same pub at the same time, Joshua would tell a story or answer Adele in a particularly hard and witty way so that I thought Adele would be hurt, burst into tears, or shout back at him. She did none of these but looked briefly across at me and said calmly: "You don't have a piece of paper, and a pen, do you?"

Of course I did. Perhaps one day I'd use it again myself.

"Cigarettes and matches."

I passed the things to her. She as usual began writing at once. I looked across at Joshua but he was safely hidden behind a tilted jar of beer. Adele looked up, sweet as a pussy-cat:

"What came after you said you never wanted to be sober again?"

Joshua put down his empty glass and carefully reminded her.

"Dictating to Adele, eh Josh?" I mumbled.

"Somebody's got to. You were, I take it, waiting for my glass?"

As a matter of fact I was, but I didn't enjoy his mentioning it.

Adele was writing like mad now. She seemed possessed, getting down everything Joshua said, and he did come out with a lot.

I came back with the drinks. Nothing had changed. She was still writing and Josh was rolling great rollicking logs down the river. It was strange. Perhaps if he kept drinking and talking and Adele kept writing they'd both be eternally happy and impossible to be with. But it wasn't like that. I asked Adele about Joshua once. We, or rather she, had just committed adultery and I was curious.

"What does Josh do when he's not drinking?"

Adele didn't bother to sigh but spoke quickly like a teacher of a toddler.

"He fails at business ventures. He reads all the books you've never read and he doesn't want to talk to anyone. He's depressed. He's awful to be with."

So that was that.

ADELE'S FIRST HUSBAND, Jerome, sometimes flew in from Arizona to see her and the teenagers. He had a ragged beard, naturally, and cruel intelligent eyes. He was a writer and a professor. It seemed he got on well with Joshua but when I met him Joshua was mercifully in Scotland. The three of us sat together in the pub staring at our drinks. Jerome sat straight upright, occasionally he fondled his beard and dropped a word or two which Adele blinked over. At first I thought he was a man of great works and authority but after a few pints of real ale, dubbed by some "the leveller", he slouched and from his comments, as ragged as his beard, I knew his act was done and he was probably only a good mediocre writer. At last he asked me: "What do you do, Paul?"

"I'm a writer with prolonged writer's block", I said.

"Oh you'll get out of that", Jerome said lightly. "Just a question of time."

"How long is life?"

"As long as a piece of string", Adele said. "How long's it been?"

"Seven months or so. Perhaps I'll deliver after nine and it'll be a fine bouncing book. At the moment I doubt it."

"What is a block?" Adele took up, "it's something that comes between writer and pen, it could be anything really, you must find out what it is."

It's everything and nothing, I thought, it's bothering and who's telling you to bother? Perhaps I didn't care about anything or anyone any more. Then Jerome gave

me the piece of advice I'd often received from Adele. "Keep a diary. If you just get a couple of hard nouns from the day, it's sometimes enough to get you started. Be like a squirrel, store the nouns like nuts."

I couldn't help but grin. Jerome was quoting Adele or was it vice versa?

"Collage!" I said, and roared with laughter I didn't think I was capable of. Maybe not being able to laugh was part of my block. Adele and Jerome looked stunned. I mumbled something and realised I was getting drunk.

"Have you got a pen and some paper?"

Jerome drew but I was marginally faster. Two pens and two morsels of paper were thrust at Adele. Feed the writer! No writer's block here, here was a writer crying out for the tools of her trade. As usual I was carrying them for her. She took a pen from me and paper from Jerome who straightened his back, and stared at the glasses, which were empty, save of course for Adele's which was full because she didn't drink. She just watched us all get drunk and made notes. Suddenly I resented that. Had we to get drunk so that she could write, or should I get sober so that I could write?

"Nothing for me", she said as Jerome got up. She was as firm about not drinking as we were about getting drunk. Especially me. I liked to float my block in beer to see if it rose or sank. Usually it was just like me. It floated for a while and then it sank, often dissolving into dreams which Adele quickly interpreted over the phone. Her analysis was based on Freud, intuition, and personal experience. I suspected all three. After the night out with Angus and Jim, I dreamt I was standing on a hill looking down at two cows which were coming up the hill. As they drew closer they became ugly bulls thundering towards me. Somehow I escaped to phone Adele about them the next day.

"Well, you know who the bulls are, don't you, Angus and Jim. You didn't like them. They threatened you."

"It's not as simple as that", I quoted gleefully. "They don't like me."

"I think it is."

IT WAS AWFUL the precious time Adele and I spent together after the drinks with Angus and Jim. It was hard enough to get away from them and when we finally did Adele kept going on about them. She apologised for Jim's rough edges but praised his sea-stories and the authentic deal he'd made with life. At last she put the sailors aside and picked up on Joshua. He really was opening a restaurant now. There was no doubt about it. He'd found an ideal site. I sighed. I had so little to say. As we stepped out of our carefully selected pieces of underwear she declared Jerome to be cruel and brilliant. I scratched my head, unsure how he had got into the act at all. I saw the ghosts of her friends, lovers, husbands floating around the room. It didn't seem right.

"Jerome used to tie me up."

"Good Lord, really, did you like it?"

She shook her head and giggled like a tickled girl. I put my arm around her. I suddenly saw her squirming in the centre of a huge silken web while Jerome scuttled back and forth, weaving and winding and waiting to eat her.

"I think you liked it?" I urged.

"I did not. I was innocent at the time. Has the Greta Garbo movie started yet?"

I groaned. Angus and Jim, Jerome and Joshua and now Greta Garbo. Perhaps if she let me gag her? This was all stiff competition for me and my block, and I responded wearily and limply. It was an evening as black and ragged as the beard that had started on my face.

"It doesn't matter", Adele said sweetly, which made me quietly angry because if it didn't matter when we didn't do it, it could hardly matter that much if we did. But Adele didn't think like that. I did that night.

"Just lie on top of me. You feel so warm and smooth."

She nursed me like the corpse of love.

"I bet you say that to all the boys", I whispered into the side of her fringe.

"I do not! And there's only Joshua now and after four years of his tantrums it means nothing. If we do it at all it's only one point three a month."

I thought about point three and felt miserable.

"Can you move a minute, Paul? I've just got to write something down."

"I've only just got here", I protested feebly, and stretched for pen and paper.

"Bucket and spade."

"You can come back."

But I couldn't and wouldn't. My head felt like a cube of stone. Everything was blocked. I stared at the television. Men with made-up eyes and expensive suits made startled eyes at each other while between them Greta Garbo was a concept of indisputable beauty. She was a loved goddess. As Angus had said: she was divine and he was one of those beaux who, having acknowledged one concept, proceeded without hesitation to the next:

"I love you, darling, I'm your husband."

Block by block, the movie proceeded until an hour had slipped away and I was churning in a rage of boredom.

I didn't want Adele to leave but I was glad when she did. We crept together through the black streets in order to avoid any lurking friends or marauding teenagers. When her house was in sight, Adele said: "Don't come any further, Paul. I'll be all right from here."

I sighed and our lips touched briefly in an affectionate kiss. I watched her as she bobbed down the road. Her beret looked like a red daisy. She stopped twice to turn around and look at me looking at her. For odd moments we seemed then like dead photographs that later we'd take out and examine in detail. A black cat stole furtively past me. I couldn't remember if that was sup-

posed to be good or bad luck. I just wanted to tear myself up into shreds and let the pieces flutter down into the gutter. Perhaps someone would find me in the morning and make a collage.

That night I dreamt I was in a room full of people. Some I recognised, some I didn't. No one could see me and I wasn't able to speak, although there was something I wanted to say. What exactly it was I wasn't sure. I heard Jim laughing and saying over and over: "He'll be all right when his beard grows."

I went into a paralysed rage and woke up late in the morning. I stared around my room: the sleeping typewriter, the wooden filing cabinet, the rows of books marching around the walls, the pens, the papers, the eraser fluid. There was no hangover looming over the horizon. I had no excuse not to work. I groaned and put the covers over my head. "Adele", I whispered, "where are you now? Now that I need you."

OF COURSE she wasn't far away, just around the next block or two, but distance like time is relative. And who was she with? The sailors from the sea, the husbands from abroad, the teenagers from hell, her novel from the collage, Greta Garbo? Did it matter? Certainly she wasn't with Paul the block. I didn't call her to tell her my dreams or anything else but she stayed in my mind, gnawing at me. I left it like that. Then I thought I might see her "by chance" in one of the pubs.

I rode my thirst around the circuit. Ponderous Monday, desperate Tuesday, calm Wednesday. It was a drunken Thursday evening before we met in The Chicken and Egg.

She sat as usual, calm and fringed, pen and paper and an untouched half of the feeblest bitter. Next to her Jim was sprawled over two chairs and talking nineteen-to-the-dozen.

I approached at a hesitant angle. Jim roared: "Hello, you miserable sod!"

"Same to you", I mumbled, feeling suddenly like a miserable sod. Adele beamed.

"Paul, nice to see you, pull up that chair."

Jim gave me his profile and I thought in his brooding eyes he looked like a miserable sod. I sat down wearily and knew I wouldn't stay long. Now I'd found Adele I wanted to get away from her again. Or Jim. I didn't know what to say. My block was spreading.

"What I need is a good collage", I said.

"Stop it. You probably do. Have you done any writing, Paul?"

"Just shopping lists. Is that a start?"

"Anything can be."

"You mean I remember to buy a cauliflower, take it home, and find there's a brain inside it instructing me to renounce the evils of vegetarianism and get back to flesh."

"A brain in a cauliflower", Jim grunted, and raised

his eyebrows as though the world around him had suddenly gone mad and I was responsible for it. I stood up. I was too blocked and drunk to make conversation. All roads led back to my bed.

"I expect I'll see you both again soon."

I was comfortably vague. I wanted to give Adele's hand a squeeze but didn't dare because a report of the squeeze might get back to the wrong person or persons. I didn't want to shake Jim's hand and didn't. I swam home and squatted in front of the television. Something had to give, something had to happen.

IT DIDN'T, not for a couple of days anyway. Then Adele called me with an invitation to lunch. I was glad to hear from her and didn't want to go.

"Don't you want to meet them all again? They're all here, Joshua back from Scotland, Jerome from Arizona, the sailors from the sea, the teenagers with meat-hooks in their ears."

The last thing I wanted to do was meet them all again.

"They're all drunk", she added, as though that was a possible option if I came. I ifted and ahed and she said well I could come if I wanted. I didn't want.

At lunchtime I cleaned my teeth twice and went. They were all drunk except for Adele and the teenagers. They were spread around the large room in various poses with various glasses amongst the bright cotton and friendly bamboo. Everything was wrong from the start. I'd no sooner said hellos, sat and sipped my wine and crunched a celery stalk than Jim began: "member that time in Singapore?"

I couldn't believe my ears and my voice which held contempt.

"Second time I've met you"—probably it was the third but I didn't like to say—"and you're still in Singapore."

This produced a dead silence. I looked at Adele. Her eyes were flashing like a lighthouse. Jerome's back was tall and authentic in his chair. His eyes were half closed as though peering into some private interior world. The nail in Angus's forehead was dark and deep. Jim's eyes were scattered and angry. Joshua was repairing a light switch and cursing aloud as though in need of attention. I wished I hadn't come. I looked to the teenagers for some support but their mouths were open just wide enough to pop a sardine in.

"Give Paul some more wine", Adele said sweetly. Angus passed a bottle and I took it with a sailor's "Ah hah!" which brought a snort of derision from Jim. There was still a silence in the room which I felt responsible for. I thought I might initiate a discussion for a change.

"Have you noticed how herpes has caught the nation's attention? Prospective lovers mention it to prospective lovers. It's like saying: are you OK? It's part of a new sexual ethic which probably goes back for

centuries and each time it's worse as though we learn nothing."

In the distance I noticed Adele stretch for her pen and paper.

"Give my regards to posterity", I said, and felt like a man from another age, hidden in the folds of an unfashionable cloak.

Adele wrote. The teenagers ate. Jerome sat. Joshua cursed and struggled with his plug. Angus stroked his smooth face. Jim grunted and broke the silence: "'member that time in Singapore."

He was deliberate. He knew I'd stopped him once. He was determined to take up his story again. I was determined he shouldn't.

"When you caught herpes", I said, and felt like the crude man I thought he was.

"No, don't be like that."

There was warning in his voice as though he assumed he was the ultimate deterrent like a nuclear warhead.

"I am like that", I said, "I'm me, you're you. I'm sick to death of the Far East."

Things happen quickly sometimes and are hard to put into sequence even if you use a collage technique afterwards. Jim and I stared into each other's eyes. We were both embarrassed. After a while his tattooed fist shot across the little cane table between us, and he gave me a more than fairly hard punch on my upper arm where I bruise quite easily.

"You're all right, Paul", he said.

It occurred to me that I'd never in my life returned a courteous punch. Carefully, because I wasn't used to it, I returned the blow equally hard I thought, bearing in my mind my lighter weight and Jim's greater size.

"You're all right too, Jim", I said.

I still wasn't sure what madness had been set in motion but I felt strangely free as if I'd been hibernating beneath stones and had finally come out into the sun just because it was the time.

Jim half got out of his friendly bamboo and, as though I were nothing and he was playing with a frisky kitten, he leaned over me and threw a few scattered blows which might have hit me if he'd had a mind to.

"This is pathetic", I said, and stood up as soon as he sat down again with a big grin on his face. I did the same to him: cat dabs, just missing.

Angus was shaking his head from side to side as though he'd seen all this before but somehow didn't want to stop it because sometime in the future it might be: "'member that time in London?" Someone was making "tch-tch" sounds. I think at this point I was ready to laugh, but it takes all types to be friends with Adele and as I sat down in my chair Jim did a very unexpected thing. He brought a bottle of wine down on the side of my head. I was surprised that it broke and I was surprised at the new blood which dripped instantly into my new beard. I looked around to find something of equal weight to return the courtesy but found I was stumbling over blocks of hidden air. Adele shrieked, a strange sound, and everyone else was making a collage of things like:

"You bloody fool . . . get a towel . . . phone an ambulance . . . lie down . . . unbutton his shirt. . . ."

I WALKED TO THE AMBULANCE with a pink turban round my head. Adele got in the back with me and I lay down. She fretted anxiously over me.

"Oh Paul, why did this happen? Angus says he's getting worse . . . schizoid. . . ."

"Alone at last, Adele."

"Oh Paul, darling, we'll always be friends."

"There's room on my bunk for two."

We kissed fondly, lingering. The moment inspired me. I shot up from the bunk in a swim of stars.

"Don't suppose you have a pen and paper, Adele."

Adele surprised me too. Out came a pen and a square of paper. I seized them gratefully like a medical prescription.

"Bread and butter, salt and pepper."

She murmured something like that but I hardly heard her. My pen was galloping. Words were racing like wild animals from a forest fire. I glanced at Adele. She had a square of paper on her knee. Across it her pen moved in sure fine strokes. I was surprised at myself: I was happy. We wrote on and on until finally we reached the hospital, where no doubt further character and copy awaited us with instruments finely tuned for these unruly days.

Triolet

The poets gather in the room,
Watching the looks on every face.
They feel the close approach of doom,
The poets. "Gather in the room!"
The hostess cries, "I'll have no gloom!
Art and pleasure, fill this place!"
The poets gather in the room,
Watching the looks on every face.

Derwent May

Modernity on Endless Trial



IF WE ARE TO BELIEVE Hegel, or Collingwood, no age and no civilisation is capable of conceptually identifying itself. This can only be done after its final demise and even then (as we know too well) such an identification is never certain or universally accepted. Both the general "morphology of civilisations" and the description of their constitutive characteristics are notoriously controversial. They are heavily loaded with ideological biases, sometimes expressing a need for a self-assertion by comparison with the past, or a malaise in one's own cultural environment and a resulting nostalgia for the good old times. Collingwood suggested that each historical period has a number of basic ("absolute") presuppositions which it is unable clearly to articulate; and these provide a latent inspiration for its explicit values and benefits, its typical reactions and aspirations. If so, we might try to locate and to uncover those presuppositions in the life of our ancient or medieval ancestors and, perhaps, build on this basis a "history of mentalities" (as opposed to the "history of ideas"). But we are, in principle, prevented from revealing them in our own age, unless, of course, the owl of Minerva has already flown—and are we, then, living in the twilight, at the very end of an epoch?

Let us, therefore, accept our incurable ignorance of our own spiritual foundations and be satisfied with a survey of the surface of our "modernity" (whatever the word might mean). Whatever it suggests, it is certain that modernity is as little modern as are the attacks on modernity. The melancholic "Ah, nowadays . . . there is no longer . . . in olden days . . ." and similar expressions contrasting the corrupted present with the splendour of the past are probably as old as the human race. We find them in the Bible and in the *Odyssey*. I can well imagine Palaeolithic nomads angrily resisting the foolish idea that it would be better for people to have permanent dwellings, or predicting the imminent degeneration of mankind as a result of the nefarious invention of the wheel. Mankind's history conceived as a degradation belongs, as we know, to the most persistent mythological themes in various parts of the world, including both the symbol of the Exile and Hesiod's description of the Five Ages. The frequency of such

myths suggests that, apart from other possible social and cognitive functions, they voice a universally human, conservative mistrust of changes: a suspicion that "progress", on second thoughts, is not really progress at all; a reluctance to assimilate transformations, however beneficial in appearance, of the established order of things.

Change goes on, none the less; and it usually finds a sufficient number of enthusiastic supporters. The clash between "the Ancient" and "the Modern" is probably everlasting; and we will never get rid of it, as it expresses the natural tension between structure and evolution, and this tension seems to be biologically rooted. It is, we may believe, a characteristic of life as such. It is obviously necessary for any society to have the forces both of conservation and of change; and it is most doubtful whether any theory will ever work out reliable tools whereby we could measure the relative strength of those opposite energies in any given society, add and subtract them from each other like quantifiable vectors, and build on this basis a general schema of development, endowed with the predictive power. We can only surmise what gives some societies an ability to assimilate rapid changes without falling apart. What makes others satisfied with a very slow pace of movement? In exactly what conditions does development or stagnation lead to violent crises or to self-destruction?

Curiosity, i.e. a separate drive to explore the world disinterestedly, without being stimulated by danger or physiological dissatisfaction, is, according to the students of evolution, rooted in specific morphological characteristics of our species, and thus cannot be eradicated from our minds as long as the species continues to remain itself. As Pandora's most deplorable accident and the adventures of our progenitors in Paradise testify, the sin of curiosity was the main cause of all calamities and misfortunes that have befallen mankind; and yet it was unquestionably the source of all its achievements.

THE EXPLORATION IMPULSE has never been evenly distributed throughout various civilisations. Generations of scholars have asked the question: Why has the civilisation which emerged out of joint Greek, Latin, Judaic and Christian sources proved so uniquely successful in promoting and spreading rapid and accelerating changes in science, technology, art and social order? Why have many other cultures survived for centuries in conditions of near-stagnation, affected only by barely noticeable changes, or sunk into slumber after short-lived eruptions of creativity?

There is no good answer. Each civilisation is a contingent

agglutination of various social, demographic, climatic, linguistic and psychological circumstances, and any search for one ultimate cause of their emergence or decline seems very unpromising. When we read studies which purport to show, for example, that the Roman Empire collapsed because of the widespread use of lead pots (which resulted in poisoning and damaging the brains of the upper classes), or that the Reformation can be accounted for by the spread of syphilis in Europe, we cannot forbear from strong doubts about the validity of such explanations. On the other hand, the temptation to look for "causes" is hard to resist, even if we guess that civilisations arise and crumble under the impact of a myriad of factors, each independent of the others; and that the same may be said about the birth of new animal or plant species, about the historical location of cities, the distribution of mountains on the surface of the earth, or the formation of particular ethnic tongues. By trying to identify our civilisation, we try to identify ourselves, to grasp the unique collective "Ego" which would be necessary, and whose non-existence would be as little conceivable as is for me my own non-existence. And so, even though there is no answer to the question "Why is our culture what it is?", it is unlikely that the question will be deleted from our minds.

"MODERNITY" ITSELF is not modern, but clearly the controversies about modernity are more prominent in some civilisations than in others and nowhere have they been so acute as in our time.

At the beginning of the 4th century, Iamblichos stated that the Greeks are by nature lovers of novelty, *neoteropoi* (*Egyptian Mysteries*, VII, 5), and that they disregard tradition—in contrast to the barbarians. Yet he did not praise the Greeks for that reason; quite the contrary. Are we still heirs of the Greek spirit in this respect? Is our civilisation based on the belief (never expressed in so many words, to be sure) that what is *new* is good by definition? Is this one of our "absolute presuppositions"? This might be suggested by the value-judgment usually associated with the adjective *reactionary*. The word is clearly pejorative, and one rarely finds anyone ready to use it to describe himself. And yet, to be reactionary means nothing more than to believe that the past was, in some of its aspects (however secondary), rather better than the present. If to be reactionary means automatically to be wrong—and the adjective is almost invariably employed on this assumption—it appears that one is always wrong in believing that the past might have been better, in whatever respect; and this amounts to saying that whatever is newer is better. Yet we hardly ever state our "progressiveness" in such a bold manner.

The same ambiguity haunts the very word *modern*. In German it means both "modern" and "fashionable", whereas English and other European tongues distinguish the two meanings. And yet the German language might be getting it right. How should the distinction be defined, at least in areas where both adjectives are usable? To be sure, in some cases those words are not interchangeable. In expressions like "modern technology . . . modern science . . . modern indus-

trial management", the word *fashionable* would not do. Still, it is hard to explain the difference between "modern ideas" and "fashionable ideas", "modern painting" and "fashionable painting", or "modern clothes" and "fashionable clothes."

In many instances the concept *modern* seems to be "value-free" and neutral, not unlike "fashionable." *Modern* is what is happening, prevailing, going on in our time; and indeed the word is often used sarcastically (as in Chaplin's *Modern Times*). On the other hand, the expressions "modern science" and "modern technology" strongly suggest (at least in common usage) that what is *modern* is thereby better. The ambiguity of meaning reflects perhaps the ambiguity, just mentioned, which haunts our attitude to change: it is both welcomed and feared, is both desirable and accursed. Advertising men, skilled in promoting various household products, use phrases like "good old-fashioned furniture" or "a soup according to Grandma's recipe", but equally speak of "an entirely new soap" or "an exciting novelty in washing powder industry." Both kinds of publicity trick seem to work. I do not know whether the sociology of advertising has produced an analysis of how, where and why those apparently contradictory slogans and appeals prove to be successful.

Since we have no clear idea what *modernity* is, we have recently tried to escape from the issue by talking about *post-modernity* (an extension or an imitation of the somewhat older expressions "post-industrial society", "post-capitalism", etc.). I do not know what "post-modern" is and how it differs from "pre-modern", nor do I feel that I ought to know. And what might come after the "post-modern"? The post-post-modern, the neo-post-modern, the neo-anti-modern? When we leave aside the labels, the real question remains: Why is malaise in the assurance of modernity so widely felt, and what are the sources of those aspects of modernity which make this malaise particularly painful?

HOW FAR BACK can we extend modernity? This depends, of course, on what we believe is constitutive in the meaning of the notion. If it is big business, rational economic planning, the welfare state, and the subsequent bureaucratisation of social relationships, the life of modernity is to be measured by decades, rather than by centuries. If we think, however, that the foundation of modernity lies in science, it would be proper to date it in the first half of the 17th century, when the basic rules of scientific inquiry were elaborated and codified, and when the scientists realised (mainly thanks to Galileo and his followers) that physics was not to be conceived as a record of experience but rather as an elaboration of abstract models never to be perfectly embodied in experimental conditions.

Nothing prevents us from probing more deeply into the past. The crucial condition of modern science was the movement toward the emancipation of secular Reason from Revelation; and the struggle in medieval universities for the independence of the arts faculties from theology was an important part of this process. The very distinction between natural and divinely inspired knowledge, as it was worked out in Christian philosophy from the 11th century onwards, was, in its turn, the conceptual foundation of this struggle. It would be diffi-

cult to decide what came first: the purely philosophical separation of two areas of knowledge or the social process whereby the intellectual urban class with its claims to autonomy was established.

Shall we, then, project our “modernity” on to the 11th century and make St Anselm and Abelard (respectively, unwilling and willing) its protagonists? There is nothing conceptually wrong with such an extension, but nothing very helpful either. We can go indefinitely far, of course, in tracing back the roots of our civilisation, but the question so many of us have been trying to cope with is not so much “When did modernity start?”, but: “What is the core, whether or not explicitly expressed, of our contemporary and widespread *“Unbehagen in der Kultur* (discontent of civilisation)?” At all events, if the word “modernity” is to be useful, the meaning of the first question has to depend on the answer to the second.

AND THE FIRST ANSWER that comes naturally to mind is summed up, of course, in Max Weber’s concept of *“Entzauberung* (disenchantment)”, or any similar word roughly covering the same phenomena.

We experience an overwhelming (and, at the same time, humiliating) feeling of *déjà vu* in following, and participating in, contemporary discussions about the destructive effects of “the secularisation of Western civilisation”, the apparently progressing evaporation of our religious legacy, and the sad spectacle of a godless world. It appears as if we suddenly woke up to perceive things which the humble, and not necessarily highly-educated, priests have been seeing—and warning us about—for three centuries, and which they have repeatedly denounced in their Sunday sermons. They kept telling their flock that a world that has forgotten God has forgotten the very distinction between good and evil, has made human life meaningless, and has sunk into nihilism. Now we, proudly stuffed with our sociological, historical, anthropological and philosophical knowledge, discover the same simple wisdom which we try to express in a slightly more sophisticated idiom.

I admit that by being old and simple this wisdom does not necessarily cease to be true; and indeed I do believe it to be true (although with some qualifications). Was Descartes the first and the main culprit? Probably yes, even on the assumption that he codified philosophically a cultural trend that had already made its mark before him. By equating matter with extension and therefore abolishing real variety in the physical universe, by letting this universe infallibly obey a few simple and all-explanatory laws of mechanics, and by reducing God to its logically necessary creator and support—a support, however, that was constant and thus robbed of significance in explaining any particular event—he definitively (or so it seemed) did away with the concept of Cosmos, of a purposeful order of Nature. The world became soulless, and only on this presupposition could modern science evolve. No miracles and no mysteries, no divine or diabolical interventions in the course of events, were conceivable any longer. All the later and still continuing efforts to patch up the clash between the Christian wisdom of old and the so-called scientific world-

view were bound to be unconvincing for this simple reason.

To be sure, it took time before the consequences of this new universe were unfolded. Massive, self-aware secularity is a relatively recent phenomenon. It seems, however, from our contemporary perspective that the erosion of faith, inexorably advancing in the educated classes, was unavoidable. Faith could have survived, ambiguously sheltered from the invasion of rationalism by a number of logical devices, and relegated to a corner where it would seem both harmless and insignificant. For generations, many people could live without realising that they were denizens of two incompatible worlds, protecting, by a thin shell, the comfort of faith while trusting in Progress, Scientific Truth and Modern Technology. The shell was to be eventually broken, and this was ultimately done by Nietzsche’s noisy philosophical hammer. His destructive passion brought havoc into the apparent spiritual safety of the middle classes, and demolished what he believed was bad faith among those who refused to be witnesses to “the death of God.” In passionately attacking the spurious mental security of people who failed to realise what really had happened, he was successful because it was he who pursued everything to the end: the world generates no meaning and no distinction between good and evil; Reality is pointless, and there is no other hidden reality behind it; the world as we see it is the Ultimatum, it does not try to convey a message to us, it does not refer to anything else, it is self-exhausting and deaf-mute.

ALL THIS HAD TO BE SAID, and Nietzsche found a solution or a prescription for the despair: this was madness. After him, not much could have been said on the lines he had set out. It might seem that it was his destiny to become the prophet of modernity.

In fact, he was too ambiguous to assume this task. On the one hand, he affirmed—under duress—the irreversible intellectual and moral consequences of modernity, and he poured scorn on those who timidly hoped to save something from the old tradition. On the other hand, he denounced the horror of modernity, the bitter harvest of progress; he accepted what he knew, and said, was terrifying. He praised the spirit of science against “Christian lies”, but at the same time he wanted to escape from the misery of democratic levelling, and sought refuge in the ideal of a barbarous genius. Yet modernity wants to be assured in its superiority, and not be torn asunder by doubt and despair.

NIETZSCHE, THEREFORE, did not become the explicit orthodoxy of our age. The explicit orthodoxy is still the patching-up. We try to assert our modernity, and thus escape from its effects, by various intellectual devices in order to convince ourselves that meaning can be restored or recovered, apart from the traditional religious legacy of mankind and in spite of the destruction brought about by modernity. Some versions of liberal pop-theology contribute to this work. So did certain varieties of Marxism. Nobody can foresee for how long, and to what extent, this work of ap-

peasement may prove successful. But the above-mentioned intellectual awakening to the dangers of secularity does not seem to be a promising prospect for getting out of mankind's present predicament. Not because such reflections are false, but because they might be suspected of deriving from an inconsistent, manipulative spirit. There is something alarmingly desperate in intellectuals who have no religious attachment, faith, or loyalty proper, but who insist on the irreplaceable educational and moral role of religion in our world and deplore its fragility—to which they themselves eminently bear witness. I do not blame them either for being irreligious or for asserting the crucial value of religious experience. I simply cannot persuade myself that their work might produce changes they believe desirable; because in order to spread faith, faith is needed, and not an intellectual assertion of the social utility of faith. And modern reflection on "the place of the Sacred in human life" does not want to be manipulative in the sense of Machiavelli or of the 17th-century libertines who admitted that while piety was necessary for simpletons, sceptical incredulity suited the enlightened. Therefore, such an approach, however understandable, not only leaves us in the place we were in before, but it is itself a product of the same modernity it tries to restrict: it expresses only modernity's melancholic dissatisfaction with itself.

We ought to be cautious, however, when we make judgments about what in our culture expresses modernity and what characterises the anti-modern resistance. We know from historical experience that what is new in cultural processes often appears in the disguise of the old and vice versa: the old may easily put on fashionable clothes. The Reformation was ostensibly and self-consciously reactionary: its dream was to reverse the corrupting effects of centuries-old developments in theology, in the growth of secular Reason, in institutional forms of Christianity, and to recover the pristine purity of the faith of apostolic times. But, by doing away with the accumulated tradition as a source of intellectual and moral authority, it in fact encouraged a movement which was exactly opposite to its intention. It liberated the spirit of rational inquiry into religious matters, because it made Reason, otherwise under violent attack, independent from the Church and tradition.

Romantic nationalism often expressed itself as a nostalgic quest for the lost beauty of the pre-industrial world; but by thus praising the past it contributed greatly to that eminently modern phenomenon, the idea of the Nation-State. Such a uniquely modern product as Nazism was a monstrous revival of those romantic reveries, thereby perhaps disproving the notion that we can properly measure modernity on the axis "Tradition/Rationality." Marxism was a mixture of unequivocal enthusiasm for modernity, for rational organisation, and for technological progress—with the same old yearning after the archaic community. And it culminated in the utopian expectation of the perfect world of the future, in which both sets of values would be implemented and make a harmonious alloy: the modern factory and the Athenian agora would somehow merge into one. Existential philosophy might have appeared a highly modern phenomenon—which it was in its vocabulary and its conceptual network—yet from today's perspective it seems rather a desperate attempt to re-vindicate the idea of personal responsibility in the context of a

world in which human persons become, with their assent, no more than media whereby anonymous social, bureaucratic, or technical forces express themselves, and people remain unaware of the fact that, in thus letting themselves be reduced to irresponsible instruments of the impersonal work of "society", they rob themselves of their humanity.

And so the "cunning reason" of history probably has not stopped operating, and nobody can guess, let alone feel certain, whether his own contribution to the collective life is to be seen in terms of modernity or of the reactionary resistance to it; nor, for that matter, which of them deserves support.

ONE MIGHT LOOK for comfort in the idea that civilisations have, for the most part, proved able to take care of themselves and to mobilise self-correcting mechanisms, or produce antibodies which combat the perilous effects of their own growth. The experience which led to this idea is not quite reassuring, though: after all, we know that the symptoms of a disease are often the organism's attempts at self-cure; most of us die as a result of self-defence devices which our bodies employ to combat external dangers. Antibodies can kill. So might the unpredictable cost of self-regulation kill a civilisation before it can regain the sought-after equilibrium. It is true, no doubt, that criticism of our modernity, i.e. of the modernity associated with (or perhaps set in motion by) the process of industrialisation, began at the same time as this very modernity, and that it has kept spreading ever since. Leaving aside the great 18th- and 19th-century critics of modernity—Vico, Rousseau, Tocqueville, the Romantics—we know in our age a number of outstanding thinkers who, in various ways, have pointed out and deplored the progressive loss of meaning in a manipulation-prone *Massengesellschaft*. Edmund Husserl criticised, in philosophical terms, the inability of modern science meaningfully to identify its own objects, and attacked its satisfaction in a phenomenalist exactitude which may improve our predictive and controlling power over things but which is gained at the expense of understanding. Heidegger spotted the root of our sinking into impersonality in the oblivion of metaphysical insight. Jaspers associated the moral and mental passivity of seemingly liberated masses with the erosion of historical self-awareness and the subsequent loss of responsible subjectivity and the ability to base personal relationships on trust. Ortega y Gasset noted the collapse of high standards in art and humanities as the result of intellectuals being compelled to adjust themselves to the low tastes of the masses. So did, if in spuriously Marxist terms, the critics in the Frankfurt School.

THE CRITIQUE OF MODERNITY, whether literary or philosophical, might well be seen, in its immense variety, as a self-defence organism of our civilisation; but so far it has failed to prevent modernity from advancing at an unprecedented pace. The lament seems all-pervading. Whatever area of life we reflect upon, our natural instinct is to ask "What is wrong with it?" Indeed, we keep asking, What is wrong with God?

with democracy? with socialism? with art? with sex? with the family? with economic growth? It seems as though we have been living with the feeling of an all-encompassing crisis without being capable, however, of clearly identifying its causes unless we escape into easy one-word pseudo-solutions (“Capitalism”, “Godlessness”, etc.). A few optimists often become very popular, and are listened to avidly; but they are met with derision in intellectual circles. We prefer to be gloomy.

It seems to us sometimes that it is less the content of change and more its dizzy pace which terrifies us, and leaves us in a state of never-ending insecurity. We come to feel that nothing is certain or established any longer, and that whatever is new is likely to become obsolete in no time at all. There are still living among us a few individuals who were born on a planet where there were no automobiles and no radios, where electric light was an exciting novelty. During their lifetime, how many literary and artistic schools have been born and died away? how many philosophical and ideological fashions have arisen and gone? how many states were built or destroyed? We have all participated in such changes; we bemoan them none the less, for they seem to deprive our life of any substance we could safely rely upon.

I WAS ONCE TOLD that near a Nazi extermination camp, where the soil was superbly fertilised with the ashes of uncountable cremated bodies of the victims, cabbages grew with such extraordinary rapidity that they had no time to form a head but produced instead a stem with separate leaves; apparently they were not edible. This might serve as a parable for thinking about the morbid tempo of progress.

WE KNOW, OF COURSE, that we must not extrapolate the recent curves of growth—some of them exponential—in various areas of civilisation, and that the curves have to decline one way or another or perhaps turn into S-curves. We fear, however, that the change might come too late, or be caused by catastrophes which will destroy civilisation by healing it.

To be sure, it would be misguided to be either “for” or “against” modernity *tout court*, not only because it would be pointless to try to halt the development of technology, science, and economic rationality, but because both modernity and anti-modernity may be expressed in barbarous and anti-human forms. The Ayatollah’s Iranian theocratic revolution was clearly anti-modern; and in Afghanistan it is the invaders who carry in various ways the spirit of modernity against the nationalist and religious resistance, of primitive

tribesmen. It is trivially true that the blessings and the horrors of progress are often inseparably tied to each other, and so are the virtues and miseries of traditionalism.

When I try, however, to point out the single most dangerous side of modernity, I tend to sum up my fear in one phrase: the disappearance of taboos. There is no way in which we can distinguish between “good” and “bad” taboos, artificially supporting the former and removing the latter. The abrogation of one, on the pretext of its “irrationality”, results in a “domino effect” and the withering away of the others. Most of the sexual taboos have been abolished, and the remaining few—like the interdiction of incest and of paedophilia—are under attack; sufficient to realise that in various countries there are groups openly advocating their “right” to engage in sexual intercourse with children (i.e. their right to rape them) and demanding, so far unsuccessfully, the abolition of corresponding legal sanctions. The taboo expressed in the respect of the bodies of the dead seems to be a lively candidate for extinction. And although the technique of transplanting organs has saved many lives and will doubtlessly save many more, I find it difficult not to feel a certain sympathy for those who anticipate with horror a world in which dead bodies will be no more than a store of spare parts for the living or raw materials for various industrial purposes.

It could be that respect for the dead and for the living, and for life itself, are inseparable. The various traditional human bonds which make communal life at all possible, and without which our existence would be regulated only by greed and fear, are not likely to survive without a taboo system; it is perhaps better to believe in the validity of even apparently silly taboos than to let them all vanish. To the extent that rationality and rationalisation threaten the very presence of taboos in our civilisation, they corrode its ability to survive. But it is quite improbable that taboos—which are barriers erected by instinct and not by conscious planning—could be saved, or selectively saved, by a rational technique. In this area we can only rely on the uncertain hope that the drive for social self-preservation will prove strong enough to react to their evaporation, and that this reaction will not come in a barbarous form.

My point is that in the normal sense of “rationality” the rational grounds for respecting human life and human personal rights are no greater than, say, for forbidding the consumption of pork among Jews, or meat on Friday among Christians, or of wine among Muslims—are they not all “irrational” taboos? And is not a totalitarian system which treats people as exchangeable parts in the state machinery, to be used, discarded, or destroyed according to the state’s needs, in a sense a triumph of rationality? Still, that system is compelled, in order to survive, reluctantly to restore some of those “irrational” values. It thus denies its rationality, and thereby proves that perfect rationality is a self-defeating goal.

Michael Charlton

“Star Wars” or Peace-in-the-Skies (II)

A Short History of Dreams & Nightmares

3. Red Alert



THE IMPEACHMENT of President Nixon and the annihilating victory of North Viet Nam over the South in 1975 crowned the political defeat of the United States. The American body politic fell into a feverish and divisive introspection—a “dark night of the soul” for Thomas Jefferson’s Republic.

When it came to President Nixon and Henry Kissinger’s choice and conduct of a policy of *détente*—designed to mitigate the ambitions of the Soviet Union—the reasonable logic of “what-might-

have-been” was slowly replaced by the more passionate logic of what had actually happened. The predominance of the USA, which had continued to guarantee the appearance of order since the end of World War II, belonged to the past.

As the Viet Nam war had dragged on, neither public opinion nor the Congress would vote the money for an accelerated Arms Race whose objective was superiority. In SALT I (the first agreement to limit strategic weapons, signed by Nixon and Brezhnev in 1972) the Americans formally acknowledged their acceptance of the Soviet Union’s achievement of nuclear parity. Both sides renounced defence of their territory and population against nuclear attack. The agreement left the Americans with a greater number of nuclear warheads, and the Soviet Union with more powerful missiles. Mr Brezhnev had said it was warheads that kill, not missiles, but any American President was bound to point out that, as the Russians placed more warheads on those larger rockets, the Soviet Union would have an overall superiority that challenged the American notion of stability.

Both sides had subscribed to a parity which, in the absence of further agreement, would be transient. If the use of nuclear weapons guaranteed “mutual destruction”, then, arising out of that nuclear stalemate, it was *conventional* military power

which shaped the outcome. If a great power used a conventional superiority to harm a rival great power’s vital interests, it would violate the unspoken assumptions of Arms Control. This, essentially, was the overall challenge to nuclear deterrence, in part created and starkly posed following the American disaster in Viet Nam.

Over the next few years the American strategic debate was powerfully influenced both in and out of government by those Americans who formed the Committee on the Present Danger. Foremost among them was Paul Nitze, who is now President Reagan’s chief Arms Negotiator. He had been “present at the Creation”, as it were, as head of policy planning in the State Department in the early years after World War II when America’s fundamental commitments and alliances were being formed. Nitze has held high responsibilities for strategic matters in almost every American administration since the end of World War II, and in the last half of the 1970s largely fashioned the character of the nuclear arms debate in America.

PAUL NITZE: Some of us in 1975, ’76, ’77 came to the conclusion that there was an inadequate understanding of the degree to which the combination of a régime which continued to believe in the Marxist-Leninist objectives and which was building a superior military capability would exploit that military capability—not necessarily in military terms, but in political terms around the world, bit-by-bit, chip-by-chip, incident-by-incident.

—What Kennedy called being “nibbled to death in a nuclear stalemate”?

NITZE: Exactly. This was not widely recognised. It was necessary to emphasise it; there were so many voices which were taking the opposite point of view, this “arms race” point of view. I think Paul Warnke was the leading one who used the analogy of two apes on a treadmill: that they were competing, and if one of the apes would get off, the situation would be cured. In other words, that the whole reason for the quote-unquote “arms race” was the fact that the United States had not ceased its efforts to maintain an adequate cap-

ability to deny the Soviet Union a useful military superiority. I thought that was a very dangerous deviation from common-sense thinking; and so did some of my friends.

FOR PAUL NITZE AND his fellow members of the Committee on the Present Danger, the ultimate issue of East-West relations was defined in the nuclear arms talks. There the nuclear weapon was held to be the master of all its interlocutors. But did it in fact impose a common moderation? More particularly, did the Soviet Union still believe its salvationist mission on earth was to spread the true faith by the sword and subversion?

There was no universal American view; America was a house divided. Nitze and his friends set out to appeal across Democratic-Republican party lines. Among those friends was another distinguished Democrat. He had served in the administrations of three Democratic US Presidents: Roosevelt, Truman, and Johnson; and a fourth, a Republican (Ronald Reagan), would appoint him to the post Paul Warnke had held as Head of the Arms Control & Disarmament Agency. For several years he was the Chairman of the Committee on the Present Danger. Like Nitze, Eugene Rostow sought the refreshment of America in the old certainties of the era of Containment.

EUGENE ROSTOW: We had formed a committee within the Democratic Party to try to rally the faithful to the traditional policy of the Party since the time of Roosevelt and Truman. It didn't gain much headway, and therefore we decided to form a committee, a bipartisan committee, which is a very characteristic thing for Americans to do when they want to press a cause. We waited till after the election of 1976, but we prepared for it. And the reason underlying all this was, of course, the weakening of the support for the *bipartisan* foreign policy of Truman and Acheson . . . the policy occasioned first by Korea, and then most acutely by Viet Nam and by the tragic experience of failure in Viet Nam.

So this was to say to the American people: Well, Viet Nam was a failure—but there's no other policy, and we must rally public opinion to realise that we've lost a battle and not the war, that the protection of the national interests of the United States requires that kind of a policy of *collective security*.

—But there was another Committee on the Present Danger at the time of the Korean War, and I wonder if you meant it to have in the 1970s the particular resonance that the Korean War had in the 1950s in calling for rearmament?

ROSTOW: Exactly. Calling for rearmament and a strengthening of the policy of solidarity. Trying to repair the damage which had been done to the national foreign policy consensus by Viet Nam.

—What was the final spur to forming the Committee on the Present Danger?

ROSTOW: The final spur was the sense that we had very little

time . . . that the hopes that had been invested in SALT I and in Nixon's policy of *détente* were manifestly proving to be false . . . and that the Soviets were gaining so rapidly in nuclear strength, despite the provisions of SALT I and the prospective provisions of SALT II, that we soon would have no alternative but to surrender. The Soviet policy with regard to nuclear weapons and therefore with regard to Arms Control agreements was extremely astute and well-conceived; but it was a policy not of *détente*, not of relaxation of tensions, but of nuclear blackmail.



EUGENE ROSTOW's perceptions of the Soviet Union were those which had been broadly endorsed by Americans during the period of the Cold War. It was central to the Committee on the Present Danger's crusade that events had once more shown the Soviet Union to be incorrigibly militant. The hopes nurtured by the activity called *détente*, and the process of Arms Control conducted by Henry Kissinger, stood confounded.

The basic concept in the SALT negotiations of “parity” as an acceptable strategic relationship with the Soviet Union was attacked as putting the United States at a disadvantage. While the United States adhered to deterrence and retaliation, parity plus the Soviet policy of “strategic initiative” (a belief in a first strike, and weapons assigned with that use in mind) in fact gave the Russians superiority. This critique was put forward in answer to Henry Kissinger's much quoted question of 1974, “*What in the name of God is strategic superiority?*”

The claim that the SALT talks had acquiesced in an American disadvantage and that Kissinger's approach was fatally flawed is, naturally, in conflict with the views of Henry Kissinger.

HENRY KISSINGER: At the time of the Interim Agreement the Soviets were building about 240 missiles a year, and we were building none. We considered it a considerable achievement that we were stopping the build-up of Soviet forces. Now, of course, you can say the Soviets would have stopped anyway. Nobody can ever prove that. We thought the maximum we could achieve in 1972 was to get a freeze on the additional “digging of holes” or of silos by the Soviet Union. Our strategy then was that, in the next period, we were going to strive for a reduction of these, plus a reduction of warheads. What we would have achieved if there had not been any Watergate, nobody can ever know.

The fact is that as soon as the Agreement was signed, suddenly people started saying this sanctified an inequality of numbers—which was total nonsense because they didn't

count the bombers. They just counted the missiles. They didn't count the fact that we had multiple warheads, that they didn't. We then achieved—even after Watergate, under Ford—equality in numbers. Whereupon the debate shifted on to the “Backfire” bomber, which has since disappeared from the scene. The basic difficulty is that if you have an opposition that is determined to wreck any negotiation on a subject as technologically complicated as SALT, the administration in office is in an almost hopeless position.

—In fact Admiral Moorer (the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs at the time), giving evidence about this, said the SALT I Treaty should be seen not in the light of what it had frozen but of what it had forestalled. That you had actually forestalled what would by 1977 have been a three-to-two ratio in the Soviet Union's favour.

KISSINGER: That's exactly correct.

—None the less, we find Paul Nitze saying by the mid-'70s that the Soviets were not following a strategy of deterrence and retaliation. They spelled out their belief in “a strategy of First Strike” and their weapons had been assigned with that in mind. Therefore, in their case, parity plus their policy of “Strategic Initiative” gives them superiority.

KISSINGER: I do not believe that the Soviets are relying on a first strike. I do believe that the Soviet Union has designed its strategic forces with a more military concept than the United States has. They do have a capacity to prevent a tit-for-tat, because they can respond with more military options than we can. In other words they can force us into initiating the destruction of civilian targets earlier than they have to. That gives them a great advantage—not to wipe out our retaliatory forces, though they may be able to do that to our *land-based* retaliatory force.

—What is your response, then, to a SALT critic like Paul Nitze, who says that the basic concept of parity was the flaw for him in the SALT agreements, because parity can't be precisely determined and it puts the United States at a disadvantage because of the differences in military strategy?

KISSINGER: First of all, you have never heard Nitze say anything like that when he was in any position of responsibility. You've only heard Nitze say that out of office; you haven't heard him say that in office. And neither in our administration nor in the administration that he is serving now, has he ever taken anything like that position. On the contrary, he has been more on the conciliatory side—conciliatory in the sense of trying to find something in the point of view that could be negotiated.

—More inclined to walk in the woods.

KISSINGER: Exactly . . . that's right. And now with the Strategic Defence Initiative Nitze has stated criteria that are in fact unfulfillable, so that operationally he is working more in that direction. But the option of superiority did not exist at

the time. There was no programme that we could get through the Congress.

THE SITUATION with which Kissinger had been confronted was the one which Nitze and his associates campaigned to redress. Whereas Kissinger had sought to transcend the ideological differences in the cooperative entanglements of *détente*, the Committee on the Present Danger examined the Soviet challenge much more in terms of the ideological concepts which the Soviet leadership used to describe and defend their policies.

The principal formulation of American policy during the era of “Containment” of Soviet power, which began under President Truman, was a document known as NSC (National Security Council) 68. Then, as now, the military strength of the West was held to be dangerously inadequate. NSC 68 considered the Soviet design of world domination to be indivisible from the Communist system and fatal to the West. The Soviet Union, the inheritor of Russian imperialism, possessed and was possessed by a world-wide revolutionary movement which required the dynamic extension of its authority.

The author of NSC 68, adopted by President Truman as policy when North Korea invaded the South in 1950, was Paul Nitze.

PAUL NITZE: I'd been much impressed by a book written by a man called Nathan Leites who talked about the “standard operating code” of the Kremlin. In it he stressed the fact that, when the “correlation of forces” was unfavourable, Lenin had adopted the doctrine that that was a time when one ought to pull back and attempt to throw dust into the enemy's eyes, so that one would have time to rebuild and to change the “correlation of forces.” But when it was favourable then one was duty-bound to take actions to nail down those advantages that one might get before the other side could change the “correlation of forces.” These two events—the removal of our monopoly and the consolidation of Communist control over the mainland of China—would be two radical changes in this “correlation of forces”, which the Soviets were bound to take into account if they were still following the precepts that Lenin had laid down.

—As in Lenin's famous remark:

“Probe with bayonets, and if you strike mush go on—if you meet resistance, retreat.”

NITZE: That's correct.

—Now, when you wrote “NSC 68”, how much confidence did you personally feel, how much did you express, that the two great nuclear powers could exist “mutually deterred” in a stable relationship?

NITZE: We felt really quite confident that it could be done. But it required many things which were quite different from a world in which only one power had nuclear weapons. In a

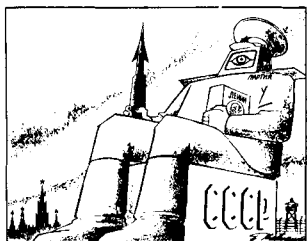
world where one power, the United States, was a democratic country and a member of an alliance of democratic countries, if that power had nuclear weapons, then there was no danger that nuclear weapons could get out of hand. Because a democracy and an alliance of democracies wouldn't permit, really, use of those nuclear weapons except under the most extreme conditions of provocation.

—You've just said that you felt confident that two powers possessing the atomic weapon could coexist in some sort of mutually stable relationship. But my own reading of “NSC 68” was that you had very little confidence in that. You foresaw the danger of war not just from accident or from crisis, or accident arising out of crisis, but from a premeditated Russian aggression.

NITZE: We felt that the Marxist-Leninist doctrine did dedicate itself to a world which would be completely Socialist as a transitional stage to the world-wide triumph of Communism, and that this called for every effort by the Soviet Union to promote such a world.

—I have here something that you wrote (in an article for “Foreign Affairs” in 1956) in which you stated your belief, some six years after “NSC 68”, that the West should maintain indefinitely a position of nuclear attack-and-defence superiority versus the Soviet Union and its satellites. Where does that belief stand in your own mind now?

NITZE: Today the situation is such that this is no longer a feasible proposition. The Soviets have developed certain advantages in what is called “prompt hard target kill capability”, in fact, distinct advantages over the West in that sphere. They've also developed certain other advantages—they have the only defence against nuclear ballistic missiles today, and they have the only operational anti-satellite system, and they have a distinct advantage in conventional weapons on the Eurasian land-mass.



and emotional public utterance. Nitze and his associates distilled the Byzantine complexities of SALT to a simple essence. The Soviet leaders had succeeded in making the state of the military balance a powerful political influence, and this was “the source of currents of fear which were transforming political positions all across the spectrum of Western politics.”

EUGENE ROSTOW: The nuclear balance was changing, and changing very rapidly—which meant that the credibility of the

American guarantees to Europe, to Japan, to South Korea (guarantees that were less formal but were obvious in the political situation, guarantees to protect our vital military interests) were losing their credibility. General de Gaulle said it for the first time; Henry Kissinger said it over and over again; and a great many other people were beginning to believe it, even though they didn't say it aloud in public.

—You're thinking of Kissinger's speech in Brussels where he said, “You cannot expect us to multiply assurances we cannot possibly mean . . .”?

ROSTOW: No, where he said something else. He said, “Great powers don't commit suicide for their allies.” It was a very blunt and very brutal—and, I think, in the circumstances profoundly unwise—statement.

—But you part company with those who see the nuclear weapon as having no utility other than to deter other people from using them.

ROSTOW: Absolutely. I think the heart of the problem is that we in the West find it extremely difficult to believe that the Soviet theory about nuclear weapons is *not* the same as our own. And I think that now if you look back at what's happened, and especially at the huge build-up of the Soviet nuclear force since 1972 (the date of the first SALT agreement), you've got to accept that the Western view of the function of nuclear weapons, and therefore the function of Arms Control agreements, is entirely different from the Soviet view. We're looking to assure stability, and to remove causes of accidental war; they are seeking nuclear superiority and our acceptance of their right to nuclear superiority, so as to assure American neutrality.

Henry Kissinger asked that famous question, “What on earth can you do with nuclear superiority?” Well, I think the Soviets have a very clear answer, and it's now very obvious. Their theory of building a huge nuclear force was not to have a nuclear war—but it was exactly the theory of the Kaiser before 1914, who built a huge fleet, not to fight the Royal Navy but to assure British neutrality in the event of a Continental war. And what the Soviets are trying to do is to assure American neutrality in the event of a war either in the Pacific or in the Atlantic.

ROSTOW'S CONCLUSION about Soviet intentions and capabilities echoed those of Truman and Acheson in the era of Containment. It called up spirits from the vasty deep of the Cold War. And the question Shakespeare made Hotspur ask of Glendower—“But will they come when you do call for them?”—became the issue in the American strategic debate.

It was the achievement of this remarkably energetic set of foreign-policy advisers who formed the Committee on the Present Danger—both Rostow and Nitze were men in their 70s—that they showed themselves to be the triumphal branch of that debate. It undermined the efforts of Henry Kissinger

and President Ford, and later President Carter, to ratify a second SALT accord. It also paved the way for President Reagan to summon up the old spirit of Containment of the 1950s, and win public support for its corollary—greatly increased spending on defence.

The early claims in the Nixon Administration for the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was the cornerstone of Arms Control, did little to discourage the notion that the two rival political systems, in their concepts of nuclear deterrence, had converged in a significant way. But Nitze, who was one of the chief negotiators of SALT I, was vehemently sceptical. The history of the Committee on the Present Danger suggests that it particularly influenced public attitudes when deep concern was allied with deep knowledge and long experience.

PAUL NITZE: I've been in this business as long as you can remember! So that this wasn't just a bolt-out-of-the-blue that somebody, suddenly, thought of Arms Control. Arms Control has, ever since 1946, always been an element which has been important in US policy. The question at issue has been whether or not it is practical; whether or not one can, in fact, get useful Arms Control which will contribute to a reduction in the risk of war.

—*Would you find any serious quarrel with something that Herbert York (who was Director of Research & Development in the Pentagon for many years and one of the President's scientific advisers) wrote of the 1972 treaty, SALT I, and the ABM Treaty? He mentions the "common understandings about basic issues" that were clearly implicit in that agreement between the United States. . .*

NITZE: Which I think is quite wrong . . .

— . . . *and the Soviet Union.*

NITZE: There were no common understandings about that. We agreed on the language of several specific documents.

—*So the idea that the ABM Treaty reflected a common doctrine. . .*

NITZE: . . . is nonsense . . .

— . . . *among the two powers. . .*

NITZE: . . . is nonsense. It's nonsense.

— . . . *of "mutual assured destruction" is not what you accept.*

NITZE: It is nonsense, nonsense. The Russians were perfectly clear that they were not agreeing to anything beyond the specific obligations which they obligated themselves to abide by in the Treaty and the associated documentation. There was a good deal of talk about this question as to whether one was agreeing to "the spirit" of something that went beyond the pieces of paper—we hoped they would look at it that way. They did not.

—*Well, one might have supposed, therefore, that you would have been less wholeheartedly committed yourself to the SALT I agreement . . . if that doctrinal difference which you've always drawn attention to, and which is implicit in "NSC 68", was still your view.*

NITZE: No, it still was my view. But I still thought that the ABM Treaty specifically could be—even though it had flaws in it, the most important of which was later cured in an agreement of 1978—but still I thought the ABM Treaty could be made into a useful document with respect to the Interim Agreement. Gerard Smith and I had recommended against the signing of the Interim Agreement which was part of SALT I. We thought that was too one-sidedly unfair to the United States. But when both pieces of paper were agreed concurrently, both Gerard Smith and I supported the package in the hope that, in the next two or three years, it would be possible to negotiate a new treaty to parallel the ABM Treaty which would comprehensively and properly control offensive systems. But we never were able to get that.

NITZE'S ABSOLUTISM CONTRASTS with Henry Kissinger's search for common interest. Dr Kissinger's policy had been to try and end the traditional American oscillation in foreign policy between "extremes of intransigence and conciliation." He had seen *détente* and Arms Control as a continuous process—an activity to be practised rather than a state that was reached. It was his complaint that SALT was unfairly made to bear the whole burden of East-West relations.

The advice given by the first representative in Imperial Russia of the London Muscovy Company in the days of Queen Elizabeth the First was: "*When you deal with these people, make your bargains plain and put them in writing. . .*" It became part of the critical assault mounted on the results of the Arms Control dialogue with the Russians that Kissinger's diplomatic virtuosity had taken too little account of this Elizabethan wisdom.

America had read into the record of the SALT agreement some unilateral interpretations. It made such agreement, as Eugene Rostow saw it, in certain vital respects little more than a promissory note.

EUGENE ROSTOW: There was a debate about what was permitted. You remember the controversy about unilateral interpretations, and there was a reason for those unilateral interpretations.

—*You mean when the Secretary of State then, William Rogers, said he was giving a "unilateral interpretation" to certain clauses which was clearly not, in terms of what happened in Viet Nam and elsewhere, the interpretation given to it by the Soviet Union?*

ROSTOW: Viet Nam didn't have anything to do with it. The background to the affair was very different, and very interest-

ing. It was the history of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We took the position that under the Treaty, if a “European political entity” emerged, it would be considered a nuclear power by virtue of succession to the nuclear status of Britain and France. The Soviets said they couldn’t agree publicly to any such statement, but if *we* made such a statement as an official interpretation of the treaty, they would not publicly disagree with it, knowing the centrality of the independence of Western Europe to the American national interest. And that was done.

Now, what happened in 1972 was exactly the same, except with a different outcome. That is, the Soviets wouldn’t agree formally to the unilateral interpretations—as I recall it, there were five of them. And the United States said: Well, then, we will announce these as “unilateral interpretations” and expect you not to differ. They never differed in public, of course. They never said those are impermissible interpretations. What happened was they went ahead and built the weapons that President Nixon and Henry Kissinger thought were forbidden.

—*And which weapons were those?*

Rostow: The SS-18s and the SS-19s. There were several others, but the general build-up was of the big weapons . . . which we then recognised again in the SALT II Treaty. It was a very very devastating experience. The tangible advantages were that this changing nuclear balance permitted them to pursue with great energy a programme of expansion based on the use of conventional force. Viet Nam was one example; the Middle East and the African adventures another. After all, the Cold War first began in Iran with a Soviet probe toward Azerbaijan. It’s now being conducted in the Caribbean, in the approaches to the Panama Canal. There’s quite a difference!



THE FACT THAT the grandchildren of Lenin stand today on the southern doorstep of the United States makes the obvious point that the East-West conflict spares no part of the world. The central critique of the Committee on the Present Danger was that this

change in the nuclear balance was radiating new perceptions of opportunity and anxiety. The American confidence with which President Kennedy had acted against Khrushchev’s diplomacy by intimidation in the Caribbean was to be contrasted with American hesitation as a new generation of revolutionaries and guerrillas supported by Moscow pulled Central America into the mainstream of world history.

The loss of the strategic superiority President Kennedy had enjoyed prevented the United States from using its conventional forces to defend its interests (as Kennedy had threatened to do). Arms Control negotiations had failed to eliminate this coercive reality.

The powerful opposition in the Congress of Senator Henry Jackson had all but nullified Kissinger’s *détente* policy. When allied with the crusade of the Committee on the Present Danger, it formed a hyphen of bipartisan support to President Reagan’s later call for the militarisation of foreign policy. Whereas Kissinger had considered that America could not keep its alliances together without dedication to Arms Control, this new consensus was overtly sceptical.

Senator Jackson’s former associate, Richard Perle, who drafted much of the Senator’s unyielding opposition to SALT, is now President Reagan’s Assistant Secretary for Defence.

—*Did the Soviet Union possess a superior insight into the military and political utility of nuclear weapons?*

RICHARD PERLE: A different insight, and an insight that, I think, was based in part on Soviet judgments about the West, about the willingness of the West to match the Soviet Union. But one should also say that if there was a superior insight on the part of the Soviet Union, it was into the nature of the Arms Control process, and how Arms Control might be used to facilitate a continuing Soviet build-up with greatly diminished apprehension in the West. I can’t think of a comparable period in world history in which one of two adversary states was permitted to expand its military forces on the scale of the Soviet expansion (between, say, 1970 and 1980) without arousing the most profound apprehensions in the other adversary state. I think the unrealised hopes for Arms Control (and the attendant psychology) and the political *détente* that we sought had the effect of permitting that build-up to take place without producing the normal reactions one would have expected at any other time in history. The history of Arms Control is not terribly encouraging, and I find the passion for it out of all proportion to its historical record.

—*The West Europeans place Arms Control and the Superpower Dialogue ahead of or higher in importance than issues about the nuclear balance—would you agree? How do you see the significance of that?*

PERLE: I think it’s very foolish indeed. Not only because there is no historical justification for the confidence in Arms Control that one would expect, given the enthusiasm for it from the Europeans. But all the Arms Control agreements in the world are not going to protect our security or our interests if the military balance is permitted to deteriorate; if it becomes adverse to the West to the point where the Soviet Union feels that it can exert pressure; if the West in turn feels it cannot resist.

RICHARD PERLE REJECTS the view that in Arms Control the process is almost as important as the result. By the late 1970s this ascendant strand of thinking among American policy-makers considered that the effort to persuade the Soviet Union to accept strategic concepts which Marxist-Leninist ideology rejected had demonstrably failed. This analysis of a Soviet Union prepared to fight and win a nuclear war was sustained by its perceived ability to do so.

Unlike the United States, they had a civil defence programme to diminish their casualties; and the Soviet Union's achievement of superiority in land-based missiles conferred the opportunity of a first strike. That threat, in turn, made American nuclear strength no longer a deterrent against Soviet expansion.

—As a statesman, faced with destiny's challenge in this dialogue with the Russians over nuclear arms, was it inevitable that relations had to be governed by the inveterate pessimism of the worst possible case?

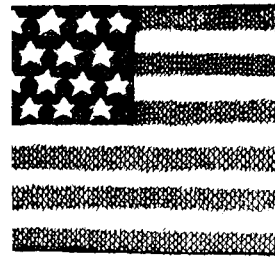
PAUL NITZE: Who suspected that Pearl Harbor would occur? Who suspected that Hitler would really be as dreadful as he turned out to be? You know, the worst possible case is generally worse than the imagination can imagine. But what you have to deal with really is what are the logical and most probable cases. You can't deal with the "worst possible" cases.

—But I ask you as a diplomat rather than, let us say, a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who is charged with a different responsibility. As a diplomat, do you still feel that in these circumstances, presented with a phenomenon like this, there is no alternative other than to accept the pessimistic scenario?

NITZE: No, I don't believe it to be pessimistic! That's what I'm quarrelling with you about. I believe that there's no point in looking at the world other than with open eyes, and accepting facts as they are. Why should one ignore facts? That road is sure to lead to disaster.

—It's very important, I think, that we should understand the issue you made over the Soviet advantage (or perceived advantage) in the big land-based missile. You spoke and wrote at the time that the Soviet Union was pursuing a theoretical "war-winning capability." Does that mean you accept that the edge they had with this big missile did not represent a "real" disarming first-strike capability?

NITZE: Yes. What I had in mind was that it represented a real first-strike disarming capability against *fixed land-based targets* in the United States and in the rest of NATO. But it did not represent an ability to take out at least a portion of our bomber force, that portion which was on alert and ready to take off at a few minutes notice; and it did not include those Sea-Launched Ballistic Missiles at sea. So it did not have a *true* disarming capability, because what was left would still be able to deny the Soviet Union any real advantages, any *political* advantages, from a military attack. It would still leave the Soviets with great *military* advantages. It would leave them in a position where they could undoubtedly aspire to win in military terms a nuclear war—in other words, to be in a position where they could end that war favourably to themselves. We still have a good deterrent; but, I repeat, I think the Soviets have an advantage in those forces which count with respect to "ending up" or "being in" a superior military position during a war. And, you know, there's only one thing worse than having a nuclear war, and that's to lose a nuclear war.



BY PAUL NITZE's measurement, the application of Arms Control agreements had furthered neither Disarmament nor stability based upon the central "balance of terror." While diplomats persisted in their search, technical advances and ideological imperatives were all the time making stability elusive, if not impossible.

The optimists had been rejoicing in "mutual assured destruction", unaware or unheeding that the deterrent threat of nuclear weapons was becoming less and less plausible. Four years ago Richard Nixon argued that, even if America restores the balance in nuclear forces:

"We will not fully restore their deterrent effect, as in crises like the Cuban missile crisis and the Arab-Israeli war in 1973. A threat of mutual suicide is simply not credible."

Henry Kissinger considered that it was "sheer escapism" to yearn for a past that technology had now proscribed; overwhelming superiority could not be recaptured.

—But hadn't Containment, which was not just the slogan but the inspiration of bipartisanship in American foreign policy, rested on superiority?

EUGENE ROSTOW: The implicit premise—and I think this is the essence of the entire problem—of what Truman said, and what Kennedy said, and what Eisenhower said, and all the spokesmen of American policy and Western policy generally throughout the early part of the period said—was that the Western nations were going to oppose aggression against their interests. That's what Korea meant. This time we were going to prevent a general war by stopping small wars. It was the reaction to that experience in Korea, then most emphatically in Viet Nam afterwards, that led the West to scratch its head and say: There must be a better way of reaching agreement than that. Because the Soviets didn't stop, you see.

—Isn't that an important distinction in your own view of what deterrence should be? Deterrence to you is not the status quo, "stability" in that sense. There is an element of compulsion about it, of coercion; that is, getting the Soviet Union, or aiming to get the Soviet Union, to do something which it is not at present doing?

ROSTOW: That's correct. What we're trying to persuade them to do through deterrence—through collective security—is to respect the rules of the United Nations Charter against aggression. It is the only code we have representing at least a nominal agreement among the powers as to the rules of behaviour in international affairs. Those rules are not an invention or a dream. They go back to the Congress of Vienna, and to the whole experience of the State system. Now what's happened is when you talk to a Soviet diplomat or for that matter a Soviet professor of law about that, he says: You're asking us to give up a foreign policy rooted in our nature as a society and in the State. In other words, they're saying: We

have a right as leader of the Socialist Commonwealth to use force for aggressive purposes against states, and you don't. Well, that's an untenable position; and unless it's changed, it's bound to lead to the most ghastly explosion.

—*But how can it be changed? How can the Soviet Union be deterred from its world view, its “historic mission”?*

ROSTOW: There are only one or two ways in which that can be done, given the folly of American policy during the 1970s in failing to keep pace with the Soviet drive for nuclear superiority. We can build like mad, which is a very disagreeable thought—*Midgetmen* and *Minutemen* and *MXs* and so on. We can develop the defensive weapons, which is of course what's happening now. The Soviets have put an enormous effort into that, and President Reagan really had no choice but to match it. It's very much like the choice presented to Roosevelt about the first nuclear weapon, when the scientists came to him and said, “Hitler is making nuclear arms.” President Roosevelt didn't have a choice. He had to go ahead.

EUGENE ROSTOW, who has served four Presidents, from Roosevelt to Reagan, has carried us forward to the present day to the political origins of the “Star Wars” proposal, and the answer it might give to Henry Kissinger's question as he contemplated the baroque superfluity of destructive power in the nuclear arsenals of America and Russia: “. . . What do you do with it?”

The view of the Soviet Union held by Paul Nitze and his associates, which had guided the American policy of Containment during the Cold War, gained the high ground once more in the failure of Jimmy Carter's Presidency and in the more confident use of military force by the Russians. Henry Kissinger's *détente* faltered in the sands of Ethiopia, and it was finally buried in the harsh hills of Afghanistan in the wake of the Soviet invasion.

In the Carter years, Republicans and Democrats of the American foreign-policy establishment, who had upheld the bipartisan policies of Deterrence and Containment ever since World War II, were divided on almost every topic. The Americans found no clear-cut political will.

4. Jimmy Carter & the Retreat from “Assured Destruction”



THE FOUR YEARS of Jimmy Carter's Presidency, from 1976 to 1980, ended in the total eclipse of *détente* with the Soviet Union. Events in those four years galvanised the American strategic debate, and they included Presidential Directive 59—a new shadow on the cave wall of nuclear deterrence.

In his famous treatise about an ideal political saviour, Machiavelli considered that the concept of necessity must govern the actions of the statesman.

The statesman can only decide what's necessary if he has a clear picture of the realities of the world in which he must act, including the ethical compromises he must tolerate. By this measurement, and in the end by his own admission, Jimmy Carter's Presidency had failed.

Carter began his Administration by saying that American strategic policy had been based on an outdated view of the world—the belief that Soviet expansion must be contained. At the end of his Administration he announced that the Russian invasion of Afghanistan had caused him to revise, drastically, that perception of Soviet intentions.

Jimmy Carter had offered to restore the American sense of moral righteousness following President Nixon's impeachment and the loss of the Viet Nam war. America turned to him with a sentimental appreciation. Individual human rights—the antithesis of Communism, which deems such

rights to be collective only—were installed by Carter as a new commandment and identified as the most compelling force for political change. America would reduce its identification with authoritarian, and therefore repugnant, régimes as a means of reaffirming American leadership and of deterring the extension of Soviet power and influence.

“Being confident of our own future”, said President Carter in 1977, “we are now free of that inordinate fear of Communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear.” In practice this meant that strategically important allies of the United States were at times denounced for their violations of human rights. There was writing on the wall for the Shah of Persia and for the “Nixon doctrine” which had made Iran a pillar of American security in the Persian Gulf.

Jimmy Carter did not, in the end, succeed in overcoming these inherent contradictions in strategic policy. The new President came to office an enthusiast for Arms Control, and believed it to be the principal activity in the Soviet-American relationship. He brought to the issue deep-seated convictions about the moral and strategic implications of “the arms race.” He had a much more ambitious objective for the SALT process, and it bore the influence of critics of Henry Kissinger's *détente* like Senator Jackson—but he began with an ambiguity.

PRESIDENT CARTER: I was impressed by the fact that all my predecessors had been successful—beginning with John Kennedy, through Johnson, Nixon and Ford—in concluding agreements with the Soviet Union. I wanted to go much further than they had gone; but I saw the great advantage of proceeding in an evolutionary fashion: that is, building upon

the foundation that they had laid before me. The single challenge that I had that was the most important was to conclude the SALT II Treaty which, in all, required about six-and-a-half years under three Presidents.

—But to what extent were your own intentions based on differing assumptions from those which had guided Nixon and Kissinger?

CARTER: I wanted to have a much more dramatic reduction in nuclear arsenals. So within two months after I had taken my oath of office, I sent Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Moscow with the first step towards the realisation of this goal. He had a dual proposal to put forward. One was just a cautious evolutionary building upon the Vladivostock Agreement. The other was a much sharper reduction—which the Soviets rejected out-of-hand and seemed to take as insincere, which was regrettable.

—Vance says that although he'd advised you not to go ahead with the "deep cuts" proposal, he was none the less angered in Moscow by "the finality and the vehemence" (as he put it) with which Brezhnev rejected your SALT proposals. What were your own reactions?

CARTER: I don't recall Vance's advising against it, but I wouldn't dispute what he said. I was disappointed and angered by the vehemence of the Soviet rejection. Gromyko called an unprecedented press conference after they were given our proposals, and talked as much about our human rights policy as he did about nuclear arms control. But, at the same time, we didn't send an ultimatum to the Soviet Union—we didn't send just one proposal, we sent them the dual proposal. One was the very gradual step, building upon the Vladivostock Agreement; and the other one a much more dramatic step with "deep cuts", to let them have their choice. Whether they were propagandising, or whether they thought that we were acting in an insincere fashion, or whether Brezhnev thought that we were rejecting the Vladivostock progress, or whether they were just showing their anger over our human rights policy, I've never been able to discern. I think only the Soviets who were in the Politburo meeting could make that analysis.

PRESIDENT CARTER ECHOES a persistent and corrosive theme in the Russian-American relationship—the doubt and mistrust engendered by the isolation and secrecy in which the Soviet party-governmental apparatus functions and reaches its decisions. It remains an aspect in which (Henry Kissinger's diplomatic virtuosity notwithstanding) not much seems to have changed since Basil Liddell Hart, the British military historian, remarked that even when they were partners in the war against Hitler, the Western Allies were "much more in the dark about Soviet forces and intentions than about the German. . . ."

The initial attitudes of the Carter Presidency to SALT reflected a different view, and was less certain of the political

(and military) utility of nuclear weapons than its predecessors. Carter's men questioned publicly whether the Soviet Union could derive political advantages from its more powerful force of land-based missiles and their perceived ability to threaten the American land-based *Minutemen* with a first strike. Such political advantage from the changing nuclear balance was believed by some leading Democrats (like Paul Nitze and his associates who formed the Committee on the Present Danger) to be the very embodiment of Soviet intentions. President Carter was more sanguine.

PRESIDENT CARTER: Some people have a morbid fear of Soviet capabilities—I've never shared that fear. I think that in a peaceful competition we have all the advantages on our side. I've never been convinced at all that the Soviets had a superiority in the military field. I think we still have an overall military superiority, and this would certainly include the nuclear arsenals on both sides.

The Soviets have a psychological need to be looked upon as equals. They are driven by this, in my opinion, to prove to the world that they are an equal to the other superpower. We've never felt this urge to have to *prove* that we were one of the superpowers, although we were indeed equal. I think we have a natural feeling that we are, in many ways, superior to the Soviet Union. That superior/inferior relationship is something that the Soviets constantly strive to overcome. There's never been a time when the Soviets have effectively used the threat of nuclear weaponry to achieve their regional goals. The only times that we've ever seen nuclear arsenals put on "stand-by alert" on a world-wide basis have been outgrowths of the Middle East conflict—and I think that's a most likely place for potential explosion in the future that would involve superpower confrontations.

On the Record



SOCIETY MUST NOT forget that ever since the beginning of the scientific age, the organized scientific community has not had a particularly good record of predicting developments that were not part of the common wisdom of the day.

In 1926, for example, A. W. Bickerton, a British scientist, said it was scientifically impossible to send a rocket to the moon. In the weapons field, United States Admiral William D. Leahy told President Harry S. Truman in 1945:

"That [atomic] bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives."

And Dr Vannevar Bush, who directed the Government's World War II science effort, said after the war that he rejected the talk

"about a 3,000-mile rocket shot from one continent to the other carrying an atomic bomb . . . and we can leave that out of our thinking."

In the strategic area, as late as 1965, the capable Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara wrote:

"There is no indication that the Soviets are seeking to develop a strategic force as large as our own."

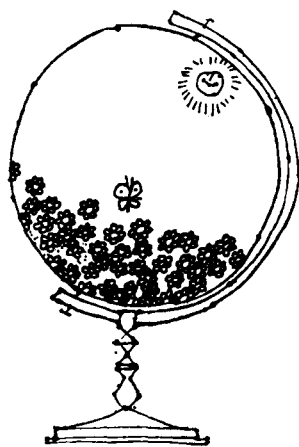
Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert Jastrow, and Max Kampelman
in THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

—But if the nuclear dimension played a role in determining the outcome over Cuba for Kennedy, would a similar situation have the same outcome today?

CARTER: No. I think that we couldn't effectively force the Soviets to yield now by the threat of using nuclear weaponry, as Kennedy was able to do.

—Doesn't that, with great respect, contradict what you've just said? That it is how they do, in fact, manipulate crises?

CARTER: No. I think the Soviets have built their nuclear arsenals up to a rough equivalency, so they are no longer forced to yield. But they haven't built them up to a level of superiority where they can hope to make us yield. I think there's a stand-off in nuclear weaponry.



THIS “STAND-OFF” was due in part to a considerable change in the President's original attitude to the state of the nuclear balance—he had been, at first, dismissive of the threat of a Soviet first strike.

In his inaugural address in January 1977, Jimmy Carter said, “We will move this year a step towards our ultimate goal—the elimination of all nuclear weapons from this earth. . . .” And Carter had indeed begun by cancelling or delaying new weapons, like the *B-1* bomber,

the so-called Neutron Bomb, *Trident* and the *MX*. But within two years—the Russians having rejected his proposal for dramatic reductions in the nuclear arsenals, and the SALT talks having failed to constrain the threat of the big Soviet missile to the American *Minutemen*—Jimmy Carter was faced with the decision to deploy two additional missiles, *Trident Two* and *MX*, to compensate for what was now seen as a growing American vulnerability.

In the first article in this series Robert McNamara (President Kennedy's and President Johnson's Defence Secretary) maintained his conviction that a “cycle of action and reaction” was the dynamic fuel of the arms race. The passing of another fifteen years of nuclear experience brought one of McNamara's successors to an opposite conclusion. Some utterances have hung in the air above the protracted struggle of the nuclear debate, among them Kissinger's ironical question about strategic superiority. Another had resonance in and beyond the Carter Presidency—those uncomfortable words spoken by Harold Brown, President Carter's Defence Secretary.

HAROLD BROWN: “When we build, they build—and when we don't build, they build.” Yes, I guess that will be carved on my tombstone, and I still believe it's correct. What that was

meant to convey was that Soviet defence programmes—and this is not by any means confined to strategic programmes and, in the context of my remark, it clearly was not limited to strategic programmes—go on the basis of an *internal* logic, and the much-quoted “action-reaction cycles” had only very modest reality. The Soviets have their own programmes, have their own objectives; and although we can limit them by arms-control agreements, we are not likely to know exactly why they're willing to accept some limits.

—But what deductions follow in terms of your testimony about “When we build they build—and when we do not they go on building”? What deductions are valid in terms of American policy?

BROWN: There are two deductions that, I think, follow from that. One is that the US needs to decide what its requirements are for strategic or conventional forces, in terms of what we now see as the threats. The second thing, oddly enough, is that there is one way to influence Soviet military programmes, and that's by Arms Control. We can influence them by arms-control agreements far better than we can influence them by our example or by our doctrinal writings—because they may not follow our example, and they may not share our doctrines.

—Can I just remind you of something you said in a speech to the United States Naval Academy, where you pointed out that the Soviets had been embarked for more than a decade on a policy of building forces for a pre-emptive strike on US inter-continental missiles? By the early 1980s, you said, the Soviet Union would possess sufficient numbers of the new big missile, the “SS-18”, to assure the destruction of the vast majority of “Minutemen” in a surgically precise and surprise attack.

BROWN: The United States in its SALT agreements never sought a guarantee that some individual element of its forces would be safe from pre-emptive attack by the Soviet Union independent of what the United States did. It is true that the Soviet build-up, aimed at giving them this capability for pre-emptive attack on one element of the US retaliatory force, had by dint of what they had done during the 1970s succeeded. When I made that speech there was in place a US programme to remove that element of vulnerability, and a SALT II agreement whose ratification would have assured a limitation on the number of Soviet warheads. So I posed the threat and I said what we were doing to respond to it. Both elements of that response were cast aside during the subsequent year. The result is that US forces which would have included a relatively invulnerable land-based ICBM component by the mid-1980s will now not include such a component, at least into the 1990s.

THEY WERE “CAST ASIDE” in the Reagan Administration not least because new events had overgrown the whole context of SALT. In consequence the SALT II Agreement, signed by Carter and Brezhnev in Vienna in 1979, was

never ratified by Washington—although both sides still adhere to the limits of missiles then agreed.

In a treaty by which the enemies or antagonists promise to limit their nuclear arsenals, the central problem is “stability through equality.” Henry Kissinger records in his Memoirs that Brezhnev could not hear often enough Kissinger’s avowal that America would proceed in its dealings with the Soviet Union on the premise of equality. How, then, did President Carter judge for himself the scale and intentions of Soviet armament, and of what his Defence Secretary Harold Brown had said: “When we build they build, and when we stop building they build. . . .”

PRESIDENT CARTER: One interpretation to be placed on it is that the Soviets were so far behind in nuclear weaponry, and they were deeply embarrassed by the Cuban missile crisis when they were branded as inferior to us in nuclear capability.

—As Kuznetsov (the Deputy Foreign Minister) said at the time: “You will never get away with this again!”

CARTER: He said, “It will never happen again.” So I think that they proceeded aggressively to make sure that they were at least equal to us.

—Is that the explanation you yourself favour?

CARTER: I think the Soviets are inclined to be paranoid. We look upon the Soviets as trying to equal or exceed US armament capabilities. We’re almost always ahead of them in technological advances: miniaturisation of circuits; the dependability of solid-fuel rockets; guidance systems; accuracy; the *MIRV*ing of missiles. We’ve always been ahead of them, almost always, in these areas. And we’ve always thought that our advantages would last five to ten years—and they’ve generally lasted from one to two years. The Soviets are quite quick in catching up.

The things that the Soviets had at the beginning because of necessity later turned out to be an advantage. For instance, they had missiles (the *SS-18s*, *SS-19s*) that they had to build because they didn’t know how to miniaturise circuitry. Once *MIRV*ing came along at our initiative, the Soviets had these enormous missiles to carry very large multiple-warhead payloads. That’s another factor. I think another one that we tend to overlook—I’m trying to put myself in the Soviet position—is that they don’t see themselves as facing just the United States. They also see as potential adversaries China—of whom they have a morbid fear for some reason—and also Great Britain and France, whom they look upon as NATO allies of ours. So they add all those arsenals together, the four arsenals, and try to equal them. . . .

—Or wish to have a superiority over all.

CARTER: That’s right, and I’m not sure that our country has ever been willing, or ever will be willing, to accept genuine equality. What we define as equality almost inevitably is going to be superiority.

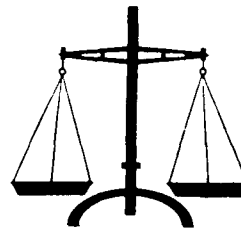
—Interesting . . .

CARTER: I think we do at this time have superiority.

—Interesting that you mention this word “equality”—which is fundamental, isn’t it, as to whether it is, in your view, desirable or achievable with the Soviet Union?

CARTER: It’s desirable. But I don’t think it’s achievable because the measurements are so highly distorted by the different perspectives from the two nations. We look upon the very large missiles as being a threat which we will never match.

The Soviets look upon our Cruise missiles, our “Stealth” capabilities being evolved; the relative invulnerability of our missile submarines with their extreme quietness; our advanced anti-submarine warfare; the Soviets’ constraints on their submarines entering the major oceans and our easy access to warm oceans almost immediately from our harbours—they look upon these advantages of ours with a great deal of concern.



ALTHOUGH CONCERNED, the Russians seemed less inhibited by a sense of risk. Eighteen months into Jimmy Carter’s Presidency they made a dynamic new thrust which placed fresh strains on US-Soviet relations. A Soviet airlift of Cuban forces into Ethiopia in 1977 assumed the pattern of the similar airlift into Angola two years before. This time it came to be viewed in Washington as a challenge in a strategically important part of the world, the Horn of Africa, and a threat to the *SALT* talks.

President Carter determined to safeguard the priority of a second *SALT* treaty:

“I will not let the pressure of inevitable competition with the Soviet Union overwhelm possibilities for cooperation.”

But the Soviet intervention raised the old and undismissible issue of “linkage.” Kissinger had said that the Soviet Union could not have the atmosphere of *détente* without the substance. The presumption underlying US Arms Control and *Détente* policies had been a reciprocal Soviet restraint. The issue of “linkage” divided the Carter Cabinet, and the President did not resolve that division. The National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, said that “*détente* was buried in the sands of the Ogaden in Ethiopia.”

PRESIDENT CARTER: I never felt that way. Brzezinski was much more inclined to want to link the Arms Control efforts with the inevitable competition between us and the Soviets on extending influence. One of my major goals was to decrease the Soviet influence in the Middle East by carrying out an agreement that would extend our own influence and lessen that of the Soviets. Another goal that I had was in the western part of the Pacific. I didn’t normalise relations with China just

to minimise Soviet influence, but it obviously was one of the results of it. So I think that this inclination of Dr Brzezinski to tie the two together was not compatible with my own. I basically agreed with Harold Brown and with Secretary Vance, who felt just the other way.

—But it clearly was a very great difficulty for you throughout the Administration? You were riding two horses, really, in terms of policy . . . and with increasing difficulty.

CARTER: Well, everybody has to ride two horses on policy as it relates to the Soviet Union. You can't put your total investment in confrontation and belligerence toward the Soviet Union. This might be politically popular, but it's counter-productive for our nation. The best approach, I think, to the Soviets is what I described in very simplistic terms. That is, cooperate whenever you can (with trade agreements, with SALT agreements, and so forth), and compete with them when you have to . . . which suited me fine.

—Cyrus Vance, in what he wrote after the end of the Carter Administration, mentions acerbic exchanges that you had with Gromyko over this Horn of Africa intervention by the Soviet Union and Cuba. Was there the feeling that you had been deceived by Gromyko? What took place between you?

CARTER: We had the technical capability to monitor radio broadcasts—particularly along the sea coast, like Ethiopia and the Ogaden. We were quite familiar with which Soviet military leaders were in Ethiopia. We knew when one of them was ill, or when one had to go back to the Soviet Union to attend his son's wedding, or when a replacement was ordered to Ethiopia. Gromyko came to the Cabinet Room and was giving the Politburo line (which I presume to him is the truth): he maintained that there were no Soviet military personnel in Ethiopia at all. I knew that he was not giving me the facts, and he knew that I knew that he was not giving me the facts. But this was not a disillusionment for me. I was familiar enough with Soviet policy to realise that when the Politburo votes to tell the world that there are no Soviet military personnel in Ethiopia, then all the spokesmen for the Soviet Union give that statement, whether it's true or not.

—But does it not also lead to something like a fundamental reappraisal of your attitude towards the Soviet Union? To see it, as many people have seen it since Lenin's revolution, as an incorrigible enemy, incapable of reassurance?

CARTER: I don't have any disillusionments about the Soviets' ultimate goals which were expressed by Khrushchev (and others): “We are going to bury the West, we're going to bury capitalism. . . .” I think that is their ultimate goal. But at the same time, you know, I have to look at the Soviet Union and their policies as being in the best interests of their own people; and one of the major advantages to the Soviet Union is to maintain peace with the United States to the extent of avoiding a mutually destructive nuclear war.

HENRY KISSINGER had seen *détente* as the adaptation of Containment to the new circumstance of nuclear parity. President Carter did not appear to see the need for Containment at all, and spoke of America exercising “mature restraint.” This reflected his belief that military power was becoming less useful as an instrument of policy in the Third World arena. Economic rather than political factors were setting the poorer nations of the South against the richer of the North. A new axis of conflict ran North and South rather than East and West.

These were the historical trends which, as President Carter said in 1977:

“have weakened the foundations on which American foreign policy had once stood—a belief that Soviet expansion was almost inevitable and that it must be contained.”

But a year later Jimmy Carter was saying that:

“the persistent and increasing military involvement of the Soviet Union and Cuba in Africa could deny this hopeful vision.”

The episode in Ethiopia clearly strengthened the critics of *détente* and of Carter's “mature restraint.” They maintained that the policy rested on the questionable assumption that the Soviet Union could be contained other than by American power or, more properly, by Soviet judgments of that power. In response to events and to their consequences in the Carter years, the coalition of adversaries of Arms Control, on both Left and Right in America, emerged even more forcefully than in Kissinger's time. The Arms Control negotiations became “victim and orphan” in this struggle of ideas.

HAROLD BROWN: I think what happened was US public dissatisfaction with a perceived shift of the military balance in a direction less favourable to the United States—this was one element. It included the results of the Viet Nam War which, although a conventional non-nuclear war of an insurgency kind, was one that the United States had lost; and that contributed to this public attitude. So also, I think, did the continued build-up in Soviet strategic capability.

A second element, I think, was a movement—on the Left, largely, and in intellectual circles—which was dissatisfied both with Arms Control and with nuclear deterrence. Dissatisfied with Arms Control on the grounds that it merely legitimised a continued build-up of strategic forces on both sides. That was not confined to the Left. Candidate Reagan said it, and President Reagan in fact still says it. But it did strike a responsive note in the public. The response that Arms Control at least allowed a balanced build-up, and prevented the US from being disadvantaged, was undercut by charges that the US was being disadvantaged (because of, for example, the throw-weight disparity).

From the Left primarily, and from intellectuals also more generally, came the statement that nuclear deterrence was itself immoral, preventing war by threatening massive retaliation which would inevitably (or very likely) involve the destruction of tens of millions of ordinary people on each side. This, of course, during the early 1980s received additional impetus from the analysis of the Pastoral Letter of the Amer-

ican Catholic bishops; but that, I think, was one of the more thought-through elements in such an undercutting of deterrence. There were other responses, including Freeze movements and anti-nuclear Marches; and, on the Right, arguments that the United States shouldn't be satisfied with *detering* a nuclear war by threatening to incinerate a hundred million Soviets. It should be prepared to *win* a nuclear war.



THESE ARGUMENTS had resonance in the Carter Administration, and the President moved to meet them. With the adoption of what was known as *PD 59* (Presidential Directive 59), it was President Carter who made the first explicit American retreat from the doctrine of “mutual assured destruction” since Robert McNamara had become convinced that that was the foundation of nuclear deterrence in the 1960s.

By the time of the Carter Presidency two decades later there was a progressive loss of confidence in McNamara's early hopes that there was a general strategic enlightenment to which all rational actors on the awful nuclear stage would conform. By then, also, the remarkable advances in missile accuracy, together with the widespread belief that the Soviet Union had never shared the Western concept of “deterrence”, introduced new calculations.

It remained an imperative of Marxist-Leninist ideology that war was an instrument of policy from which nuclear weapons could not be exempt. In which case, did the United States have any choice other than to regard even nuclear war in a more traditional perspective? General William Odom was an important contributor to the American judgment of Soviet military policy and intentions in the Pentagon as Assistant Chief of Intelligence, and now as Director of the National Security Agency.

GENERAL ODOM: I see the Soviets building a very large force structure—as effective as they can make it—in order to affect the *political* climate in the East-West political competition. I would not impute to the Soviets a desire to use those weapons, to go to war. I think they will do all they possibly can to avoid that. But the one thing they will not do to avoid it is to shrink from an essentially offensive political and military strategy in the world.

—Now, General, I don't want you to voice a treasonable utterance about a former Commander-in-Chief . . . but when President Carter said that neither side was able to manipulate nuclear weapons for political purposes, that would not be your judgment?

ODOM: No, I did not share that view with him. Nor did I think, do I think, President Carter held that view at all times.

—What makes you say that?

ODOM: Because under his Administration (at least at the level of official policy) there was a more explicit shift away from “assured destruction” in our policy than at any time since World War II.

—You mean the “counter-force options” like Presidential Directive 59?

ODOM: I mean Presidential Directive 41 (which said that civil defence, like other strategic defence, is part of the overall balance—and once you say that defence is part of the balance, you have abandoned “assured destruction”). Also the Telecommunications Presidential Directive (which required communications commanding control capability for all levels of war, even large-scale nuclear war). And then you mention *PD 59*, which was really only a final step down a series of policy steps that marked a rather significant transformation.

THOSE POLICY STEPS accompanied a similar transformation in President Carter's concern about Soviet intentions. The President was addressing, as his predecessors had done, the central question: *What deters the Soviet Union?* More precisely, what was the ability of nuclear weapons to deter aggression if stability in the form of “mutual assured destruction” was acknowledged?

Robert McNamara had wished to provide President Kennedy with nuclear threats and warnings which would be an alternative to the extremes of “doing nothing” and the unimaginable catastrophe of all-out nuclear war. In this respect President Carter's *PD 59* represented a return to McNamara's earlier ideas which the advances in nuclear technique, it was suggested, now made more plausible.

PD 59 presupposed the possibility of “limited nuclear exchanges” against precise military targets, in the manner of traditional military exchanges in the past, in order to reinforce the deterring threat of nuclear weapons. These were the new shadows on the cave wall. They reflected “thinking about the unthinkable”—the mirror image of Soviet policy.

—When you signed Presidential Directive 59 into existence in 1980, what had you intended to convey?

PRESIDENT CARTER: Some of the motivations behind these Presidential Directives are still highly secret. But there were two overall considerations that I think I can give you.

One is that we had a new relationship with China, whereas in the past we always considered ourselves as being required to prepare for two-and-a-half wars—to fight against the Soviets, to fight against the Chinese, and then to fight some small regional conflict that might erupt in the Middle East or Central America or somewhere. After we normalised relations with China, it became obvious that it was highly unlikely, even with the greatest stretch of the imagination, that we would go to war with China.

That was one of the factors involved. The other one was an inclination to target our nuclear strike locations in order to avoid concentrating on population centres, and specifically to

destroy the military and industrial capabilities of the Soviet Union.

—Raymond Aron, the French political philosopher, used to call this sort of thing “strategic fiction.” Is that a term that you recognise or would agree with?

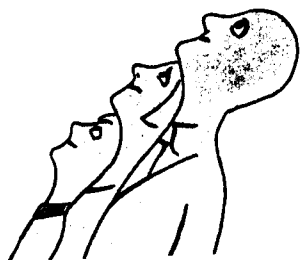
CARTER: Well, you know, it wasn’t nearly as profound as some philosophers or military analysts say. It was an adjustment.

—But were you not seeking, in putting “PD 59” forward, to replace “mutual assured destruction”, the doctrine of MAD?

CARTER: Not really. I think that (if you’ll let me use my expression) “mutual assured vulnerability” still persists. I’ve forgotten the exact figures, but if we had unleashed even one of our *Trident* submarines and destroyed just the Soviet military and industrial capabilities that that would entail, there would still be tens of millions of people killed. I think the Soviets recognised that they could not ever with impunity launch an attack on our country, and that’s the essence of it.

—But was it meant to send certain signals to the Soviet Union?

CARTER: Not really. This was not a Presidential Directive that was publicised. It was for our own military forces, and was evolved over a period of a couple of years. It was a very careful analysis about how to use any level of nuclear attack in the most effective way. Of course, if we launched our entire nuclear arsenal the destruction would probably encompass the entire earth.



THE PRESIDENT’S tone concerning PD 59 seems almost deprecatory. Whether the statesman does indeed consider such scenarios to be *doctrine* or whether they point more to an “attitude” is part of the strange mental universe of deterrence which, if it cannot convince, cannot be refuted. But these more explicit speculations about limited nuclear war have played their part in animating the Peace and the Freeze movements in the West. Here is the genesis of some at least of the political and psychological factors which have led President Reagan to respond with his “Star Wars” proposal—the President’s dream of a space shield, a defensive system which would “kill missiles, not people”—and to say, in effect, “You are afraid of nuclear war—I will protect you!”

Two years after he had gone to the White House believing that the West had had an “inordinate fear of Communism”, President Carter said (in 1978) that to the Russians:

“Détente seems to mean a continuing struggle for advan-

tages in which the Soviet Union apparently sees military power and military assistance as the best means of expanding their influence.”

Jimmy Carter described his policy for a stable relationship with the Soviet Union as “competition and cooperation.” But, undermined by Soviet actions, the path of cooperation—whose principal symbol was Arms Control—was rapidly breaking up. It remained only for one event in particular, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, to eliminate it altogether.

PRESIDENT CARTER: I have always been convinced up until this moment that we could have gotten SALT II ratified—had the Soviets not invaded Afghanistan.

—When that invasion came (towards the end of 1979) we find you saying this:

“My opinion of the Russians has changed more drastically in the last week than in the previous two-and-a-half years.”

Can you amplify that? What did you mean?

CARTER: Up until then, the Soviets had basically used surrogates to carry out their aggression or their use of military force to expand their influence—in Viet Nam, and also with the Cubans in Angola, and to some lesser degree in Ethiopia. And here the Soviets in Afghanistan reverted to what I thought was a very counter-productive use of their own military forces in an adjacent country, one of the satellite nations, Afghanistan. They brought on themselves the condemnation of the entire world. And I think they not only opened up for themselves a much higher degree of world-wide condemnation, which weakened the Soviets among Third World countries, but cast out the window the benefits of good relationships with us—and also the amplification of the SALT II Treaty. So I think that they just made a horrible mistake.

—Why do you think they did it?

CARTER: I think: misjudgment. I have read some analyses, even from the Soviet Union, that indicate that the Soviets think it might have been a misjudgment. But who knows what goes on in the secret chambers there? I think they thought that they could rapidly subdue the Afghans—which flies in the face of historical fact. I think they also looked at the troubled region in the Persian Gulf, Iran and Iraq, as a possible or ultimate target for them to gain access to warm southern ports and to capture the oil supplies in that region.

—But doesn’t that only lend credence to Brezhnev’s reported statement to the Warsaw Pact meeting that the “correlation of forces” had moved sufficiently in their favour to allow him to take that risk?

CARTER: Yes, I think that does add credence to what he said. But it still doesn’t confirm that what he said was accurate—because I think that the Soviets are worse off now because of the invasion of Afghanistan.

—You say that you could have got SALT II through the Senate,

had it not been for Afghanistan. But I wonder whether you wouldn't agree, in retrospect, that your twin relationship of "cooperation and competition" with the Soviet Union was disappearing even before the Soviet invasion?

There was the Cuban and Soviet intervention in the Horn of Africa, and the loss of four countries to governments which were less friendly to the United States than their predecessors had been—Afghanistan (in 1978, before the invasion); South Yemen; the Sandinistas in Nicaragua; the overthrow of Somalia, and of the Shah in Persia. Now these were all considered American defeats, in terms of influence.

CARTER: I don't agree that all of those were characterised even then as "American defeats." Over a period of time there had been notable Soviet defeats as well; and, you know, there's a constant give-and-take and jockeying back-and-forth, some victories and some setbacks. But I still have no doubt that, because of the merits of the case, the SALT II Treaty would have been ratified. I think this is corroborated to some degree by the fact that Reagan himself has announced he is abiding by the SALT II Treaty; and of course he is heavily influenced by many of those who were opposed to the Treaty (or professed to be opposed to it) back in 1979.

WHAT IS the possibility of America finding in its relations with the Soviet Union a "middle way" which is also a balanced, stable, and continuing policy? Both Henry Kissinger's *détente* and President Carter's theory of that relationship as partly competitive and partly cooperative, had tried to do this. Both failed—Carter in the backwash of Soviet actions and the rising wave of anti-Soviet feeling in America which carried President Reagan to the White House. We might recall Kissinger's statement:

"While we made our share of mistakes, the fundamental assault on 'détente' came from Moscow, not from Washington."

In his turn, what did President Carter believe to be the Soviet contribution to the decline in support for his own passionate concern—Arms Control?

PRESIDENT CARTER: I think there was a great contribution on the part of the Soviets to the decline of Arms Control. Their Afghanistan invasion set it back several years, and I think that President Reagan's "Star Wars" proposal is likely to set it back an equal period of time.

—Do you regret, though, that you didn't go on with SALT yourself right to the very end, take it to the country, risk everything?

CARTER: No. I did the best I could. The only thing that I could do with SALT II was to prevent it being defeated; and, as you know, it was not defeated. I requested from the Senate majority leader, Senator Byrd, that the treaty be held in the breast of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate, not be brought to the floor for vote—because it was obvious, after the Afghan invasion, that if it had been brought to the Senate floor it would have been defeated and therefore rejected. So the SALT II Treaty has never been rejected. It is still in the breast of the Foreign Relations Committee.

—No regrets that you didn't fight the election on it, or something like that?

CARTER: No. I don't think so; it was impossible. Because of their persistent attacks on the people of Afghanistan, the Soviets were so condemned by me and by the American people by the time the 1980 election came along that it would not have been possible to promote better relations between us.

THE IMPOTENCE with which America watched the long imprisonment of its Embassy staff as hostages in Teheran may be said to mark the end of one design of American foreign policy—and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the beginning of another. The divisions within the Carter Administration—the general tone of indecisiveness which it set when it was faced with increasing antagonism and competition with the Russians, and the decline in American power—assured the triumph of its conservative critics and paved the way for President Reagan.

President Carter had tried to expand the number and the scope of nuclear arms-control agreements. But he doubts America's willingness to accept genuine equality—"what we define as equality is almost inevitably going to be superiority." And when each superpower possesses today some 25,000 nuclear weapons—what is superiority?

The challenge to this impasse in thought came from President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative, "Star Wars."

A concluding article will be published in next month's ENCOUNTER

Laurence Lerner

Full Circle

Born in this village, left at seventeen,
Returned at seventy, died. Her parents' house
Shrunk and sold. Watercress still for sale
At Peaslake farm; penny a bunch it was.
Limp from the stream, it tore your mouth. The owls
Still hooting nightly, "Home. Go home." The cars
Tearing the place apart. It bleeds. Her cousins
Living in Guildford. Weeds in her sister's garden.
Born here. Come back here. A biography.

That leaves out everything: sun on the rock,
White on the water. The last thrust of sea,
The sight of Cape Town lurching in the wind.
Her brother on the dock: "that's Table Mountain"
—the looming presence she would learn to live with.
No owls, no watercress. At first, no letters.
Grapes, naartjies, watermelon. Suburban gardens
With huge black harmless gardeners. Dark hibiscus
Within its wall of green. Dahlias exploding.
Weeping for letters, weeping when they came.
On Sundays the young men, handsome or clever,
But never both. Her brother's wife, her brother,
Carefully saying nothing. The stony mountain
Carefully saying nothing. No one to ask.
The young men growing more importunate,
Then less. And so she chose the clever one.

She watched her son steal all the cleverness,
And hide himself in words. She watched him leave
Into the thrusting sea, and dared not ask.
The sun flared on the water, hurt her head,
Shouted his absence. Again she wept for letters.

She woke with morning. Day like a spider's web
Was sticky on her face. As the hours passed
Her skin grew drier, she could feel the village
Throbbing inside her. Watercress for tea,
Draggled and sharp. Mother in tears. "Where's Will?"
"Your brother's gone to make his fortune, dear."
"Can I go too?" She felt the room go still.

If it would rain, if it would only rain.
Fifty-three years, and back in England. Rain
Would wash the stickiness, would still the owls,
"Come home, come home." While her son watched, her hand
Wavered and dipped, trying in vain to tear
From her dry skin the spider web of air.

Jean Hanff Korelitz

The Properties of Breath

I—Descending the Lung

Hand over hand we inch. Our grips
are fine hairs, moving
in their tides. We sink
from rung to coated rung until
it broadens out: a landscape, arcing
to the edges of the body. Looking
over shoulders we can see it: lung,
translucent mine, its dim. We cannot
move our feet for the mire the smoke makes.

II—Burning the Property

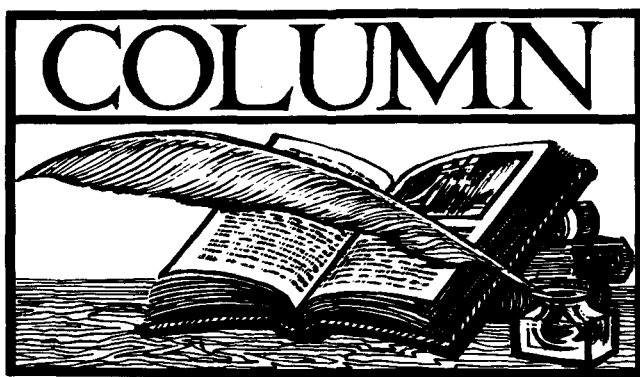
Smoke wakened us; the field
sloping up to the stone wall filled
with it, the filaments
of our neighbor's grasses flying.
Shovels and boots: our heels
brought his seedling flames back
to the earth, making them
black ash, a thick
scar at the field's rim.

Later, when the smoke had stilled, our neighbor
scattered ashes from his cigarette. He stubbed it
in the black, remarking
how it hardly mattered now. His chest
expelled itself. The property
would be more fertile, he decided, for that burn. We eyed
his steaming streaks, those tumours
on the lung of his slopes.

III—The Properties of Breath

These are the patches we circumvent,
their pools of dark. They list
the properties of breath:
involuntary, breeding, burned. Tonight
our cigarettes smoke end to end, drawn down
to settle in that dim. What things grow here
we do not tend or till.

Our lungs expel themselves. We trap
what comes up, call it poetry.



IF GOD HAD MEANT people to fly, He'd have given them boarding passes. Or window seats—or call buttons—or plastic meals: the variations are endless. Like sex and tombstones, and for much the same reasons, aviation attracts wags. They used to vie with each other to interpret airlines' acronyms. BOAC: *Better on a camel*; TWA: *Try walking across*; ALITALIA: *Always late in take-off, always late in arrival*; SABENA: *Such a bloody experience, never again*; SAS: *Safer at sea*; JAL: *Just about legal*; LUFTHANSA: *Luggage untraceable, fares too high, and no safety arrangements*; QANTAS: *Quite a nice trip as sardines*.

These unfounded aspersions were mild by comparison with Bob Newhart's monologues. "G'morning, ladies 'n' gennelmen, this is your Captain shpeaking. We are now heading for—er, for—er, yeah, well. . . ." Then there was the real-life Captain Thompson, who on night flights would come aboard after the passengers, with a white stick and dark glasses. Tapping his way to the cockpit, he hung up a notice: BLIND FLYING TONIGHT. Later, piloting an old biplane around the Scottish islands, he would actually pretend to be a passenger, taking over the controls because the real pilot hadn't shown up, and trying to remember what the manual had said about how to land.

Sex and tombstones, then: a heady mixture of glamour and fear. The tragedies of 1985 gave fear an added emphasis; but the glamour of flying has not quite faded, even now. For children brought up on Biggles stories, it used to mean vicarious adventure: rickety, dare-devil single-seaters cavorting in combat or battling through storms with the mail. Mermoz and Saint-Exupéry; goggles and leather helmets; cries of "*Contact!*" as someone swung the prop. That world lived on in Gavin Lyall's early thrillers, inspired by his National Service in the RAF. For many, war service was their first airborne experience—if only in the unforgettable panic of waiting for a dispatcher's signal to step out into space.

An Irish great-aunt was renowned in my family for taking up flying in the 1930s. Shades, I used to think, of Amy Mollison; but her exploits were probably tame. Not for her, I imagine, the looping-the-loop I watched spellbound from the garden—or even the stately grey airship of which someone gave me an absurdly heavy toy model, made of painted tin. The rest of us were resolutely earthbound until several years after World War II. Then, flying for the first time in civilian comfort, with no other passengers on board, I marvelled as we came through the overcast, turning a grey London day into sunshine above fleecy clouds.

A faint sense of wonder still survives on the dullest journeys—but only just. It's hard to remember, now, that Neville Chamberlain's first trip by air was on the way to Munich in September 1938; that President Truman wasn't allowed to fly home from the Potsdam conference; that the last "whistle-stop" Presidential campaign, by rail instead of flying visits, was in 1952. Cross-Channel scheduled flights have been breaking the 1939 world speed record for something like twenty years. Air travel has mushroomed from romance into routine.

THAT'S NOT TO DENY its peculiarities. Computer-printers have simplified the issue of tickets; but the tickets themselves, with their Byzantine system of codes and boxes, are still as complicated as when they had to be filled in by hand. Fare structures, with insensate rules about paying less if one stays longer and includes a Saturday night, seem part of some Alice-in-Wonderland, nohow-contrariwise, there's-glory-for-you competition in consumer bafflement, egged on by similar ingenuity from British Rail. Air "hostesses"—whom tired businessmen from Mars might suppose to be offering tea-ceremonies and related services—no longer dispense boiled sweets and chewing-gum to help offset unpressurised cabins; but on many airlines one's still ushered aboard to piped music, as if at a genteel but lowbrow funeral, perhaps at Forest Lawn. The seat belts are no longer called "safety belts"—either to avoid alarming us or because "safety" seems an exaggeration: but they're still religiously crossed on the seat like the forelegs of a praying mantis, so that everyone's delayed while fiddling them from under the buttocks.

Notoriously, too, everyone's clutching a plastic bag full of "duty-free" tobacco and spirits. This is odd in several ways. First, as we all know, it adds to the payload and the fire hazard; and no one's satisfactorily explained why the goods can't be bought on arrival instead of departure. Secondly, "duty-free" doesn't mean "at cost": the airports levy the profits they think the trade will bear, and some "duty-free" purchases are dearer than in High-Street discount stores. Finally, the whole notion of duty-free liquor and suchlike reeks of the days of the siege economy, when travellers escaped from their protectionist homelands to whoop it up in tax havens or on the high seas. There's a hint of brandy-for-the-parson and boats with muffled oars crunching on to some lonely beach to escape the coastguards: "Foine silks, milady", the glint of a cutlass, cries of "Halt, in the King's name!" It doesn't make much sense in the Common Market—but who dares begrudge the children their dreams?

AND CHILDREN we seem to become, once we board an aircraft. Even without candy or Muzak, we're fussed over by Nanny, greeted brightly as if arriving at some stranger's party, tucked into our places, told where to stow our things. Soon the birthday tea arrives, with sweetmeats individually wrapped, identical lest there's jealousy, and hygienic nursery knife, fork, and spoon. Our going-away present is in the pouch in front of us: a glossy, very educational in-flight magazine. Amazing facts about air travel: did you know that every

day, in the world's major airports, passengers buy 500,000 London policemen's helmets, 600,000 models of the Eiffel Tower, and 450,000 ashtrays featuring the Colosseum? That six million mini-tablets of soap are stolen every year from aircraft lavatories? That Ruritanian Airlines check their aircraft *electronically* every twenty-four hours? Snowed by reassuring statistics, we read on. "The Hottest Millionaire Resort on Earth" is described sycophantically by some free-loading hack. Another reveals "The Secrets of Making Real Black Pudding." A third anatomises "A Forgotten Language: Cockney Rhyming Slang"; or, it may be, "Grumbling—A Great Parisian Art." Somewhere, breathlessly, a famous comedian tells us "What I Forget When I Pack"; and, sprinkled among these timeless essays, alongside advertisements for Knightsbridge service flats at only £1500 a minute, there are jokes and puzzles for the under-tens.

Then, on long flights, comes bedtime. In the early days, I believe, there was a dormitory deck, where rows of sleepers snuggled in sheets and blankets. One's lucky, now, to stretch out across two seats. But wait: there's a soothing story on the movie screen—and on some airlines there are bedsocks and a goodnight drink. Better accept, for dawn is coming all too soon to the slumber party. Wakey-wakey for a good old-fashioned breakfast, to set you up for the day. And if all the excitement's too much for your digestion, there's always a brown paper bag.

A friend of mine found a use for the sick-bags when travelling in North Africa. The man sitting next to him asked what they were for. "Ah, that", said my irresponsible friend, "is a very powerful *gri-gri* against air-sickness. You wear it on your head." The man obeyed instructions: so did all his companions. All wore their paper hats as if from Christmas crackers, and not a soul felt ill.

I'VE SEVERAL TIMES felt queasy in aircraft, but for quite different reasons. Once, flying over Norway, I looked out of the window to see the starboard engine gushing flames. "Is that normal?" I asked the stewardess. She blanched and headed for the cockpit. We flew back to Oslo on port engine alone.

On another occasion, I was leaving London for Hamburg with a stop in Brussels. "Why not take out insurance?" my wife asked. I duly fed the machine and secured her future. As Brussels airport came in sight, we went into a steep dive, like a wartime Stuka. No machine-gun opened up—but we cleared the runway by a hundred feet. Up again, tilt, bank round, then down like fury again—and again we overshot. It was white-knuckle time, cue for a Bob Newhart announcement. Not a word from the flight deck. I began reading the small print on the insurance. Round again, straighten up, air brakes, stomach playing washing-machines, then the downward approach, and BUMP! And bump, and bump again. We seemed to slither to a stop, and all was noisy relief and activity. Out at last into the transit lounge, and unexpectedly on to another aircraft, from Lufthansa. It took off like a powerful vacuum-cleaner, hoovering up the miles. I never knew what had gone wrong on the first leg of the trip, but I've avoided insurance ever since.

And so we come back to fear. It's no consolation, if you've lost a friend in a plane crash, to be told that the air is safer than the roads. Economy measures, it seems, have skimmed a few proper precautions: in some aircraft, extra seats have been fitted, which block up exit doors. The regular mime to a recorded announcement about life-jackets has never much impressed me when we're flying mainly over land. Why not parachutes? Too cumbersome—or too costly? I'd sooner take to the silk than crash in the cabin, even at the risk of pranging a roof or breaking an ankle. And then there's airport security. For reasons too boring to go into, I carry a vast bunch of keys in my hip pocket. Sometimes this alerts the bleeper at the electronic check-in. Sometimes, but not always. Cause for concern, I feel.

SO, WITH MY USUAL COURAGE, I've rather cut down on travelling by air. There's something Conradian in strolling the deck of even a Sealink ferry; something of *Stamboul Train* in even the rail trip from Le Touquet to Paris. Travel, you know, not tourism: none of that claustrophobic junketing in an aluminium cylinder which one airline celebrates in its TV ads. I don't suppose my reaction's typical. Business is business: time is money—the firm's money, and one's own time. But after the disasters of 1985, some people at least must begin to wonder whether it's worth it—especially when flights within Europe can cost more than six times as much per mile as flying from London to Los Angeles.

There's an interesting contrast between the cost of transport and that of telecommunications. Since the oil-price shocks of the 1970s, transport costs have naturally soared: but telephoning has grown steadily cheaper compared with everything else. In 1970, forty litres of petrol in France cost the same as 140 telephone charging units. By 1980, the same amount of petrol cost the same as 260 units—nearly twice as many. If people behaved like economic man, they'd surely spend more time on the telephone, and less on the road or in the air.

Ah, you may say: there's nothing like meeting people face-to-face. True. But technology can do it, without moving carcasses around. "See you next week", say the television presenters, lying in their expensive teeth: what they mean is "See me." But the viewers feel warmed—they call them "Bob" or "Terry", like family dogs. And what's possible on one-way television is feasible on two-way videophone. It simply takes getting used to. With that, and with teletex, videotex, and teleconferences, countless meetings could be cancelled, and mailing costs drastically cut.

It may seem a bloodless means of communication. Politicians, no doubt, will never lose their urge to "press the flesh." But once the primal contact's made—the laying-on of hands, the guzzling together, the human fellowship of the wash-room—it should surely be possible for imagination and electronics to conspire for intimacy's sake.

Think, after all, of how we first greeted the telephone itself. That, too, involved both glamour and fear. We soon learned to smile at sit.-com. families like the Huggetts, whose

aitchless ma was scared to pick up the handset, then shouted into it as into a gale. But light fiction of the 1920s and '30s was full of flirtatious "wrong numbers." Marivaux would have loved it. The early telephone belonged with cigarette-holders and cocktails and Lagondas—another adjunct of the smart set, echoing with silvery laughs. Long before breathers, clients of the Samaritans, or burglars doing market research, the phone was the playground of practical jokers. It even sprouted its own crop of cartoons. There was, in those days, a touch of the uncanny in a voice that could conquer distance and penetrate your walls.

Now, of course, it's a commonplace. There was only mild surprise when the German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and the French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing used to chat down the wire in English. The telephone had its virtuosos, like the violin or the harmonica: I knew one who could charm the hind leg off a fellow-statesman; and we all know the seductive voices used by Moonies and mail-order canvassers. Even telegraph operators, rippling away in rapid Morse, come to recognise their partners' "fists" and characters. An ordinary telephone, fair hearing, and a good memory can

easily transform apparently tinny quacking into a full-size person of flesh and blood. If, as seems all too likely, more and more of us are doomed to work in front of micro-processor screens, we may already be adapting to what once would have seemed an impossibly cerebral way of life.

YET, EVEN WITH fibre-optic cable and ever more sophisticated subscribers, I still can't quite convince myself that telecommunications will supplant travel. The need to stir one's stumps is perennial. The longing to see other parts of the world may diminish as television explores them for us and technology obliterates their differences. But while there are still wild places and curiosities—or Disneylands—we shall go on braving the airways like sedentary flying lemmings.

It may be some consolation that these small creatures don't actually hurl themselves off cliffs: they breed in such numbers that they rush about madly looking for enough to eat. If God had meant them to commit mass suicide, He'd have given them airline food.

M

Ram On A Mountainside

At the foot of the escarpment
I nearly stumble over you,
a shaggy off-white wet patch
dead among the rocks.

I project the curve of your fall,
see you back up there chewing,
your wool angry at the wind
as rain buries into you; but your face,
now split open to the weather,
complacent.

Nearby a busy stream impels
itself between littered boulders,
loops evasively round you.

As always at these places
precipitate rubbish there before you,
unburied reminders of an ever-present scar;
an old mattress, not sound enough
to land on, its springs a parody
of your skew horns, mocks
your sprawled sleep.

Gaping at your wasted head
I wonder which grey patch misjudged,
which part, eager for that extra mouthful,
pushed you one step too far, and
was convinced that this dead ram
could never be you.

Neal Mason

NOTES & TOPICS

A Tale of Two Countries

By Alain Besançon



ON A SPRING DAY in the middle of May, Mr Babrak Karmal was solemnly received by General Jaruzelski. The General lauded the “community of struggle” which united People’s Poland and Revolutionary Afghanistan, both of them “targets of imperialist aggression.” *Translation:* these two figureheads of the Communist movement must indeed confront the same task, which is that of destroying the resistance of society in their respective countries with the backing of Soviet military power.

What are their chances of consolidating the “Soviet empire”? An empire presupposes a measure of positive construction, of the kind undertaken by Great Britain in India or by France in Morocco—the organisation of a viable society and a functioning economy, generally acceptable to the native population. The USSR has neither the means nor the slightest intention of doing any such thing. It is enough to take domination to the destructive point where the local Communist Party can rule in tranquillity. How much progress have they made?

The Poles have noticed that General Jaruzelski is always in uniform when appearing publicly in Poland, and in mufti when he makes his visits to Moscow. That is surely because in his own country he is at war; whereas in Moscow he is really at home, and at peace. Poland’s greatly reduced standard of living is now on a level with the Soviet Union’s: that is a signal success. But the decisive point is more intellectual. For Poland’s most astonishing achievement since the War is to have succeeded in maintaining a Western style of intellectual life. Stifle critical thought, and ignorance and mindlessness and linguistic deadness will reign unbroken from the Elbe to the Mekong. I am afraid that since Gorbachov’s recent visit, the work has been proceeding apace.

Attacks on the Church are now a daily occurrence. After all, the Church runs a kind of shadow ministry of culture and national education. In order to crush the dissidents, the penal code has been strengthened. Since the 10th of May anyone participating in an unauthorised demonstration risks a two-year jail sentence. General Kiszcak, who tried to build himself a liberal reputation as a more enlightened policeman, now calls the opposition “CIA agents.” Something like “death squads” see to the task of killing or beating up certain awkward elements. During the trial of Adam Michnik, an

heroic dissident and a remarkable writer, neither foreign correspondents nor his family were admitted; this is a throwback to strict Stalinism. I learn that Bronislaw Geremek, one of Europe’s finest medieval historians (and a prudent adviser to Lech Walesa), was expelled from the Academy of Sciences without the slightest consultation with the members.

The big difficulty remains the University which, since 1980, has made itself into a bastion of autonomy and freedom. The rectors have been changed, and the new appointees will receive full powers to exclude nonconformists. I imagine that the summer holidays will have helped to promote a definite “normalisation.”

IN AFGHANISTAN the system of what I can only call self-Occupation has proved incapable of holding the country. The Afghan Communist Party has had to be supported by the World Communist movement and, as the Soviet Constitution is said to stipulate, by the Red Army—more than 200,000 men at present.

It is quite wrong, I would argue, to compare the war in Afghanistan with the war in Viet Nam. For one thing: during the latter, the Vietnamese population grew by several millions. In the last seven years, Afghanistan’s has diminished by a third—about two million dead and four-and-a-half million refugees.

The job is less delicate than in Poland. In face of a general insurrection, it has simply become a matter of terror and extermination. Not long ago the Soviet Ambassador in France came to lay a wreath in Oradour. Yet dozens of “Oradours” are being perpetrated, month after month, by the Soviet army on the march. Whole provinces are being stripped of their population by mass purges, and the destruction of crops and the ensuing famine. Young Afghans dispatched to the USSR for “re-education” will return as new cadres for what is left of the old country. This was, I recall, the technique used in Soviet Turkistan during the 1920s, at the time of the Basmachi war. Communism does not really innovate in any respect. The Soviet army is finding this theatre a useful testing-ground for its new weapons and a training-field for its raw troops. These are kept in quick rotation, so as to pass their apprenticeship in a military ruthlessness which may find employment elsewhere.

Thus it would seem that, from the Soviet viewpoint, Poland and Afghanistan are one and the same battle—and at next to no diplomatic cost.

Pakistan keeps strict control over the very paltry aid which reaches the Afghan resistance, and prevents them from receiving the anti-aircraft weaponry they urgently need. It also aims to keep the neighbouring tribes divided. Out of hatred for Pakistan, India is openly supporting the USSR. The Arab world has no clear Afghan policy. The main hope of the Afghan combatants lies in the very persistence of their resistance—which according to some observers could bring about a changed awareness among Soviet Muslims (by proving to them that Islam is stronger than Communism). That is why the Soviets are in rather a hurry to get it all over with.

Does the West understand the magnitude of what is at

stake? Hardly. Dissent in Poland and rebellion in Afghanistan are two intolerable facts which jeopardise the Communist world by simultaneously exhibiting both its spiritual illegitimacy and its structural weakness. Meanwhile we ration our aid to the victims and, in effect, come to the rescue of their common destroyer. Poland may soon be welcomed into the International Monetary Fund; but it self-confidently announced to the Western powers the amount of economic aid it intends to receive before deigning to pay the current interest on its old debts. Embargoes and sanctions have been practically lifted. High Polish officials have been received at the Quai d'Orsay.

When we come down to it, the West is sealing the breach in the system of Soviet domination and offering it a chance to quell the two blazes that refuse to die out. Soviet diplomacy has announced, in Moscow and Geneva, and elsewhere, that the condition for a new *détente* is the surrender of these fighters; and we listen. Yet still they fight.

London Commentary

Rummaging among the Pebbles

By Edward Pearce



“I AM NO economist, thank God.” The words are those of William Whitelaw when he was still Leader of the House of Commons. I could say as much for the trade of psephologist. That sort of thing is best left to the Ivor Crewes of this world who, if they get it wrong, do so with authority. However it is irresistible, on contemplating the British political scene and its new

third dimension, not to psephologise a little. Since the word comes originally from *psephos*, the pebble cast into a vase by voters in Periclean Greece, we are all tempted to rummage among the pebbles of 1987 or 1988.

In this connection a most interesting and little publicised piece of work is the paper (No. 172) written for the research division of the House of Commons Library by Robert Clements. Mr Clements takes as his data two sets of County Elections (in England only), those for 1981 and 1985, and makes a comparison between performance at the General Election of June 1983 with the County results two years earlier and two years later, dividing those county figures into parliamentary constituency strength. There are many provisos, both to the whole operation and to individual seats.

Fewer voters take part in a county election; this or that seat may not perfectly fit (especially where county boundaries are crossed); not every major party contests every council seat, there are many successful candidacies in local government which blur the sharp party definitions of a General Election. Conservatives often masquerade as “Independents” but not all Independents are Conservatives. The author of the paper admits that it is full of necessary reservations. The outcome, then, is very rough-and-ready, and one should walk round it three times, casting salt over one’s shoulder, like an actor who has quoted from “the Scottish play” backstage. . . and of course I am not a psephologist, thank God!

In this limited territory, however, the Conservatives progressed from 40.2% in 1981 to 50.2% in the General Election to 38.4% in 1985. That is a very bad figure indeed for the Tories, for 1981 is a most advantageous base for comparison. Mrs Thatcher was near the depth of her pre-Falklands unpopularity, the Alliance had not started its brief heady run of outstanding results. To have *gone down* from such a dismal base, if only by 1.8%, is as bad a performance as Mr Norman Tebbit and his Central Office advisors can wish to contemplate.

Nor has Labour anything to cheer, on the statistical face of things. It is also down, by nearly 5% (from 34.9% to 30%). However, it is resoundingly up on the dreadful figures of 1983, in that most desolating of General Elections when in this part of England it registered a mere 21.4%. The Liberal/Social Democratic Alliance, interestingly, made a 9.8% jump between '81 and '83, which deftly by-passes the wonderful months for the Liberals and the SDP when they were registering poll and by-election figures in the high 40s and once topped 50%. But between the 1983 General Election and the County Elections of 1985 the Alliance is statistically frozen, with 27.9% echoing mournfully to 27.9% across Deadwood Gulch.

Now we are dealing here only in the narrow parameters of England, and rural or small-town England at that. London is not included, nor are any of the great urban spills of Greater Manchester, Sheffield, Newcastle, Liverpool, Leeds/Bradford, or Birmingham. Scotland, where the Tories will be slaughtered at the next election, is absent; so is Wales. And this is essentially Tory territory. The measure in seats, which Mr Clements also thoughtfully provides, makes this clear. On a very rough basis, figures which read in 1983:

Conservative	263
Labour	40
Alliance	7

now emerge as

Conservative	176
Labour	102
Alliance	32

THERE IS SOMETHING almost unnerving about the Tory Party taking only 176 seats in the shires and medium towns. Give or take the odd couthie burgh or Birmingham suburb, what else have they to look forward to in residual Britain? Outer

London seats and bits of Wales if they are lucky. The Tories were judged in the last Council results on their own best-case territory. Five seats out of every eight won in the 1983 election—263 out of 395—come from this piece of relatively prosperous and comfortable England. The Celts, the Geordies, and the big-city black, brown, and unemployed have still to be counted.

Clearly Labour, whatever the limits of *percentage* figures, has a good deal to be pleased with. Of its 209 seats on the results of 1983, 169 came from *outside* this segment. All of that, plus the marginal Scottish, London and Northern seats it must expect to win, can be added to 102. The arithmetic of near-victory begins to be thinkable. But of course we are rummaging with pebbles. Labour is at all times a prospective victim of prospective victory. There are numbers—beyond the reckoning of statisticians—who will vote Labour but will not vote for a Labour government. Mr Kinnock will never concede this, but every essential step he now takes is based on a lucid understanding of the maxim.

LEAVE LABOUR for a moment and consider the alternative Opposition, doing well but not at all sensationally with 27.9% at both the General Election *and* at the poll hypothesised from the County results, yet moving from 7 seats in the first to 32 in the latter—a nice way of making their eternal point about proportional representation.

The Alliance figures become quite different if, instead of looking at outright victories, we incorporate near-misses. Where have they got into the high 30s or better, or come within 5 or 6% of the winner? On that basis, the Alliance jumps into the 90s, and it does so almost exclusively at the expense of the Tories. Something which I have argued in principle before in these columns comes true as the numbers are crunched. The problem for the Tories is that they are far too strong in the South-west of England and in the Home Counties. It is a case of having slain, not the dragon, but the bogey.

The prospects of Labour winning Falmouth and Camborne in Cornwall (a seat they once held) or Woking in Surrey are laughable, but the prospects of the Tories losing either seat to the Alliance leave them thin-lipped and thoughtful. Look at some of the lush places in England where the extrapolated figures either give SDP/Liberals the seat or bring them into spitting distance: Newbury in Berkshire, Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire South East and Cambridgeshire South West, Peterborough and Cambridge, Torbay, Torridge and West Devon (indeed almost every seat in Devon), Hastings and Eastbourne in Sussex, 5 seats out of 11 in Surrey (the glossiest and best-funded dormitory for the near-as-dammit-rich in the whole country), and the remaining 4 seats in Somerset to add to the recent prize of Yeovil!

Now my definition of a good Alliance result has always been “Yeovil in spades”, and with these 90 or so seats hypothetically won or come close to on local-government polling, Yeovil in spades—expansion from a growth point—becomes serious politics.

The Liberals and Social Democrats are placed to do

exceptionally well in highly modern, economically expanding Cambridgeshire, the electronic county. How long before propinquity does as much for the comfortable voters of neighbouring Norfolk, where the Alliance scores respectably but has not quite broken through? Between Hounslow and Land's End—that is, from the West of London to West Cornwall—Labour is dead. The same is almost as true of the tract from Dover in Kent to South Lincolnshire in the East Midlands. Precisely because Labour is of no account, the secondary Tory voter, casting *his* pebble simply to keep Labour out, need no longer trouble himself in those tracts of Britain, while Labour is not going to offer more than ceremonial candidates.

THE INTELLIGENT OBJECTION to the scenario which is building up will, of course, have already formed in the reader's mind. You are insisting, he says, upon thinking locally. In a General Election the voters will think nationwide; they may not be scared of Surrey Labour in Surrey, but they are very scared of Labour nationally. True, and in that sense the Clements paper reflects better results for Labour than Labour would altogether care to see. Given a likelihood of Labour being elected, not only will Labour *not* be elected, but the Alliance will come away burned as well.

The limitless ability of the Tory Party to offer itself as a congenitally mixed metaphor of Hadrian's Wall, mother's apron, village bobby, and opium-flavoured lollipop is beyond calculation. This is the party which depends upon anxiety, which prospers by uncertainty, and does pretty well out of other people's silliness. What would suit Labour no end would be the prospect of being thought not seriously a contender for an absolute majority, but able to pick up perhaps 40 seats. Labour at a ceiling of 250, with or without coalition partners, is solidly unfrighting. My own intuitive guess is that the conscious collective will to vote Labour into an absolute majority does not exist and will not come back. But if they were underestimated, and freely proceeded to consolidate the lost Northern and Midland seats and to perform functionally in sweet England as well as Clements projects, then not only would their own performance greatly prosper, but they would help the Alliance immeasurably. For Alliance success turns upon a secure electorate in soft places *feeling safe to vote for it*.

In consequence, we must expect the Conservative Party to attempt (not altogether untruthfully) to sell Labour very long. They must make war upon the notion that the Tories are themselves invincible—which is indeed not true but is widely believed when Labour needs 121 extra seats for an absolute majority. Labour, *per contra*, if they are smart, will also (in Lyndon Johnson's phrase) start poor-mouthing themselves. Only the Alliance has an advantage in persuading voters that it is likely to do better than a first view of the figures suggests. The Alliance is by definition a party (two parties) of momentum, rising expectation, and the “We can do it!” pledge. It is also crying out for by-elections in Conservative seats. Mr Martin Stevens died suddenly, leaving a small majority in Fulham, which the Government would

gladly concede to second-placed Labour. But in the overwrought circumstances of by-elections a sensational victory for the SDP will look unsensational. A Brecon or a Portsmouth has the effect of indicating to electors hesitating for fear of a wasted vote that the third horse is up and running.

Of course it will be objected that County Elections are no guide, and that the overall Conservative position, which recovered remarkably between the 40.2% registered in 1981 and the 50.2% achieved in June 1983, still contains potential. But between those two dates fell the Falklands War—which will not, God willing, be repeated. The most substantial thing the Tories can hope for is one, possibly two, “Budgets for Votes”, in David Owen’s happy expression. Since their problems chiefly reside with middle-class voters turning away out of distaste at unemployment some distance from Surrey and Somerset, the value of tinkling, tangible cash is considerable as an incentive, if not for economic activity then for political exertions. Money versus sympathy could sum up the battle for souls being fought across the next two Budgets.

It is also hoped that a trend towards marginally better employment figures will have set in, so that a figure of say 2.5 million out of work will constitute improvement. It goes beyond anything we can judge at this stage of the party struggle to say whether such a two-handed strategy of ingratiation and expectation will win the soft Tory vote back from the Alliance. But it is precisely that soft Tory vote, the doubters of the West of England and the Home Counties, at which the Government is targeting itself. The ironic response of pangs of conscience in the comfortable shires will take the form (if persistent rumours from the Treasury are correct) not of tax cuts at threshold level to take more poorer people out of the tax system, but of cutting standard-rate income tax to the direct benefit of the rich high-minded voter.

Never underestimate the role of low motives in politics! Nigel Lawson, who bitterly resents charges of being a mere IQ mechanism without political facility, threatens something very blatant and crude, a fiver on the table. But that does not mean that it will not work.

ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF last year the Conservatives began to run scared. There was a perceptible recovery a little after their Conference in October, and a feeling that the Autumn Financial Statement contained the means to restore their natural territory. If they did succeed in this, Labour’s recovery on *its* home ground—the temporarily lost Boltons and Burys, the seats won in Scotland and Wales—could be lived with. What rightly worries the Government is the prospect of being enfiladed; of, as it were, losing Hastings to the Alliance and Darlington to Labour. For Labour to win alone is only arithmetic of the most platonic sort. But Labour on 260 seats out of 650, with the Alliance at 70, is a feasible, non-rhetorical option.

However, much bigger things can flow from that. The Conservatives, who owe so much to a worked-out vein of deference and to a still rich seam of apprehension about Left-wing governments, are not naturally popular in themselves. The fear of being eclipsed by an alternative party of the moderate Right (which is what Dr Owen is trying, against

Liberal Conference’s inclinations, to set up) is real.

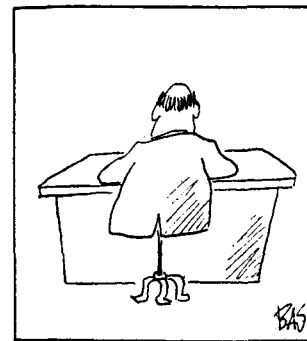
A great deal of goodwill has been used up, sometimes by the Government’s virtues, sometimes by Mrs Thatcher’s own abrasiveness, now so ineffectively muted. The voters dislike the Tory tone and the peremptoriness of seven consecutive years in power. If whole counties full of trees, good fortune, and second cars can drift to the Alliance, if Mr Paddy Ashdown’s ’83 victory in Yeovil can, two years later, produce by infection Alliance scores (extrapolated from the County results) of 38.1% in Bridgwater, 41.9% in Somerton and Frome, 34.2% in Taunton, and 49.9% in Wells, the apprehension among Conservatives may be that if a three-party system establishes itself, the *Tories* could evolve into the third party.

What one says should be garlanded with caveats, especially as Mr Lawson jingles ready cash; but for the Conservatives apprehension, in greater or lesser degree, is in order. Pebbles can be used for stoning.

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

The Urgency of “Liberalisation”



GOVERNMENT and opposition in France at the moment both seem to agree that a free economy—liberalism—is a good thing. The Socialist majority, it’s true, avoids using the word *libéralisme*, but prefers to talk about “modernisation”, “rigour”, or “a profit for France.” Even so, the Socialists are beginning to sing an interesting

tune. They don’t want taxation to penalise creativity; they praise the market economy; and they are even rethinking the functioning and finance of such sacred “achievements” as nationalisation, social security, and the costly “social tourist associations” which date from the Popular Front of the 1930s, as well as unemployment benefit itself.

At a public meeting on France’s future, organised by the magazine *l’Expansion* last October, Michel Rocard was bold enough to speak openly and directly about “the ideological bankruptcy” of the Socialist Left. True, he described the Opposition’s proposals for 1986 as “stupid”; but this was no doubt humility, since his own are very similar.

Nevertheless, as soon as it’s the moment to take the ideological plunge, courage fails at the very edge of the diving-board. Rarely has the Government paid such fervent tribute to free enterprise—while putting so many of its own men into every conceivable job, including posts in the economy which should have gone to people from the private sector. Of

course, elections are in the offing, and the future of the faithful has to be assured. But the spoils system is hard to reconcile with the citizens' freedom of choice.

Last summer, the Government finally announced that it was going to authorise private non-governmental television stations. Good news—none of its predecessors had. But no sooner was the announcement made than the Secretary of State for Communication Techniques laid down in advance what the “vocation” of these “free” stations was to be. Was one of them to be devoted to culture, another to the weather, or vaudeville, or what? Just imagine a legislator of 1881 establishing the freedom of the press, but at the same time telling one newspaper to specialise in crossword puzzles, another in law-reporting, and a third in romantic serials. Taking back with one hand what has been given by the other, the Government ensnares us once again in the regimented society.

On the Opposition side, obviously, there is more open support for the liberal cause. Studies, books, and documents proliferate; and, despite what Socialists claim, these works are for the most part serious, scholarly, and measured. So much so that the remedies most of them propose are homoeopathic. After ruthless analysis of the reasons for our plight, and categorical descriptions of the changes that are needed, Opposition leaders suddenly grow vague and cautious when they have to produce a time-table for action.

Their favourite adverb is *progressivement*—“gradually.” They are afraid, they say, of creating a “shock effect.” Knowing the reluctance of all French Governments, whatever their colour, to give up the least shred of power, one is reminded of Benjamin Constant's remark:

“Politicians, however disinterested, always hate limiting sovereignty: they regard themselves as its heirs. Even when an opponent has it, they cherish it because it will pass to them.”

No doctor can dictate the nature and gravity of his patient's illness and how long it will take to cure. Our politicians go on talking as if society's needs depended on them, and not on society itself. That is precisely what has to change. In *Le droit sans l'Etat* (Presses Universitaires de France), one of the subtlest political tracts of 1985, M. Cohen-Tanugi pointed out that “France appears recently to have begun a quiet revolution. It is becoming a contractual society.” This is the opposite of a regimented society, which assumes and encourages its citizens to be infantile. Our present leaders hand down their ideas like disdainful charity, telling us “I asked for your votes—not your advice.” This they oddly describe as “avoiding demagogy.”

OUR PLIGHT is far from new. In *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (1856), Alexis de Tocqueville quoted a Royal Circular of 1761 which announced that the *Gazette de France* would henceforth be produced under supervision of the Government. Make no mistake: this decision resulted less from a taste for censorship, which by that time had become rather jaded, than from the Government's belief that no one else in France was better qualified to

publish a good newspaper. And this conviction, clearly, has grown with the centuries. “The King”, the Circular declared, “has condescended to concern himself in details with the improvement of the *Gazette*, and wishes to give it the superiority and celebrity which it merits. He has expressed great displeasure that his views have been so little followed. . . .” Already, in other words, a public information service. It sounds quite like our very own Secretary of State “for Communication Techniques.”

The State is not the only impediment to the modernisation of France. But every such impediment takes the same form. A minority—the State, the administration, or some corporate body—seizes the power of decision which should belong to society as a whole. The country suffers, indeed suffocates, especially in the public services because those who operate the machinery have surreptitiously diverted it from its proper uses.

Take one example. Most people would agree that, in a developed society, the key to successful change is scientific research. Yet, for a prime instance of how an essential public service can be castrated, read the chapter of François de Closets' book *Tous ensemble* (Seuil) entitled “The Scientific Unionocracy.” The *Cour des Comptes* has produced a prize enumeration of misdeeds on the part of the French National Committee for Scientific Research: a very short working week, very long paid holidays; very few results and publications, very many “research premiums”, poor productivity by research workers, and often no workers at all. One of them is busy in the Polisario Front; two others have disappeared without trace; one lady, whose conjugal devotion exceeds her scientific zeal, has left the laboratory to follow her husband to La Rochelle. All these eminent intellectual toilers have nevertheless continued to be paid, and for several years at that. Such social parasitism seems worthy of the *Ancien Régime*, whose famous absentee priests and bishops were so much stigmatised in republican tracts.

But there is worse to come. The trade unions have won a famous victory—to discredit selection and promotion based on merit as assessed by the competent scientific authorities. Not content with usurping the function of the competent authorities—as elsewhere, but most grievously in scientific research—the Unionocracy has managed to have trade-union militancy recognised as “scientific activity.” “The CNRS”, as de Closets writes, “is the only scientific organisation in the world where trade-union and political militancy is considered to be ‘the administration of research’, and is placed on a par with scientific work as a criteria for judging merit and deciding on promotion. . . .”

Seeing that since 1981 the Unionocracy has managed to turn research workers into established Civil Servants, administratively permanent eggheads, lifelong seekers after truth with no obligation to find it, the scale of the disaster is clear. Could this double perversion—of public service and of scientific research—be achieved without a “shock effect”?

And there are hundreds—thousands—of such perversions. A century ago, Paris was the world's leading financial centre. It now lags behind the stock exchange of Singapore (with only two million inhabitants). The nationalisation of banks in 1982 has certainly tied our hands; but our financial system was

Who Did You Say "Marx & Engels" Were?



THIS TRANSCRIPT is a translation of a survey conducted in Budapest. It was spontaneous and unrehearsed—and provides a rather candid picture of the state of “ideological preparedness” of the average Hungarian.

Radio Budapest sent two of its reporters first to Marx Square to ask passers-by who Karl Marx was.

A PASSER-BY: Oh, don’t ask me such things.

—not even just a few words?

I’d rather not, all right?

—why not?

The truth is, I have no time to study such things.

—But surely you must have heard something about him in school?

I was absent a lot.

ANOTHER VOICE: He was a Soviet philosopher. Engels was his friend. Well, what else can I say? He died at an old age.

A FEMALE VOICE: Of course, a politician. And he was, you know, he was what’s his name’s—Lenin’s, Lenin’s works—well, he translated them into Hungarian.

AN OLDER FEMALE VOICE: It was mandatory to study him, so that we would know.

—Then how about a few words?

Come on, now, don’t make me take an exam on my eighth-grade studies. That’s where we had to know it. He was German, he was a politician, and . . . I believe he was executed.

—Whom was Marx Square named after?

A VERY OLD FEMALE VOICE: Well, wasn’t he that great German philosopher? No? Marx, Engels, Lenin? No?

THE RADIO REPORTERS then went to Engels Square:

—Do you know whom Engels Square was named after?

A PASSER-BY: After Engels.

—And who was Engels?

He was an Englishman, and he screwed around with Communism. [Laughter]

—Do you know whom Engels Square was named after?

AN OLDER FEMALE VOICE: I don’t know. I am not from Budapest. I don’t know.

A MALE VOICE: Well, let’s see, Engels? A revolutionary.

—And do you remember his other [first] name?

Engels, Engels . . . Marx Engels. Marx, wasn’t it?

ANOTHER VOICE: One of his names was Marx, the other Engels?

ANOTHER VOICE: That’s it.

—Where did Engels live?

A FEMALE VOICE: Well, where did he live, you ask. Well, he lived in Leningrad, that is, in Moscow.

—Could you tell me whom Marx Square was named after?

Karl Marx.

—Where did he live?

Well, he died.

—But where did he live?

Well, partly, so far as I know, in the Soviet Union. That’s where he studied for a while, and then I think he also spent some time in Hungary. I wouldn’t know exactly.

—Do you know whom Marx Square was named after?

SEVERAL VOICES: No, we come from Szeged. We are from Szeged so we don’t know.

—Do you know whom Engels Square was named after?

A MALE VOICE: No.

—And Marx Square?

I don’t know that either.

—And Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Street? [Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was a Hungarian anti-fascist politician, executed by the Nazis in 1944.]

Well, after Bajcsy-Zsilinszky.

—Who was Bajcsy-Zsilinszky?

AN OLD FEMALE VOICE: Well, actually, he was a Hungarian, and he didn’t like the Horthy era.

—What was his other [first] name? What Bajcsy-Zsilinszky?

I don’t know. Was it Bela? [To another person] Do you know whom Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Street was named after?

AN OLDER MALE VOICE: Bajcsy-Zsilinszky. He was a revolutionary.

—Do you remember his first name?

Gyorgy Bajcsy-Zsilinszky.

—Who was Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Street named after?

ANOTHER FEMALE VOICE: Endre.

—Who was he?

I don’t remember that school stuff any more.

A MALE VOICE: Well, so far as I know, Engels was originally a German.

—And his first name?

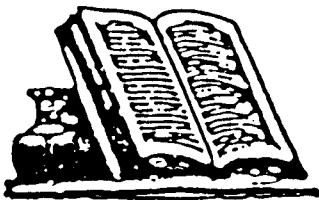
THE SAME VOICE: Karl, wasn’t it? Wasn’t it Karoly [Hungarian for Karl]? Or was Marx called Karoly? I don’t know. I don’t know. It’s not important either. At the seminary they just kept referring to him as Engels, because once he was mandatory.

already arthritic long before that. The 1945 wave of nationalisation, the restrictions on credit, the complete subordination of the Bank of France to political control—all turned our money market into the exact opposite of a market. In a persuasive recent book, *Desétatiser (Freedom from the State)*, published by Robert Laffont, the economist Bertrand Jacquillat has clearly shown, among other things, that the uniformity currently imposed prevents any bank offering its customers a service different from that of its competitors. So there is no competition, and France cannot propose any new financial package—apart of course from artificial schemes dreamed up by the Ministry.

The result is that our credit institutions look to the Government instead of to their clients. So do the clients themselves. Businesses invest vast amounts of non-productive energy, not prospecting the market, but looking for subsidies. This quest has acquired a technique: what Michel Albert calls *subsidiologie*. That is why, under the present system, there has not been, there cannot be, and there never will be any substantial and spontaneous growth in investment. For that to occur, as Renaud de la Genière, then Governor of the Bank of France, wrote to the French President in 1982, “financial institutions would have to compete fairly, relying on dynamism rather than privilege.”

To move from the infantilism of a regimented society to the sense of responsibility of a contractual one is not, therefore, a simple matter of ideology. It is a practical matter—and *une question de survie*. What is a contractual society? One in which as many activities as possible are based on free contracts—between private citizens, between firms, between firms and citizens, between consumers and producers, and even between teachers and those they teach. This is not only what French people want, it is what they need if French civilisation is to be reborn.

Story-Teller



SOMERSET MAUGHAM was fond of presenting himself as a sheer story-teller, by which he meant that he offered no philosophical or aesthetic “message.” Following on from that idea, it would be possible to distinguish two

kinds of novelist: those who tell a story in order to write a novel, and those who write a novel in order to tell a story. Here, the line of Flaubert; there, the line of Maupassant.

Jacques Duquesne belongs firmly to the second category. His latest novel, *Alice van Meulen* (Grasset), is neither a transparent confession (in fact it evinces that rare phenomenon, a total lack of narcissism), nor a manifesto, nor even a recantation; it is an intrigue, with plot twists, characters, and a heroine. The story has its own construction and independence, but in the background move characters from another novel, among them that “Maria Vandamme”, the vigorous plebeian figure of his previous novel, who

earned Duquesne the *Prix Interallié* in 1983.

The new novel is the story of an exceptional woman, this time a patrician; it tells of love and loves, sailors and sailors’ inns, against the broad background of the great industrial adventure of the 19th century, with a detective plot stirred in. It resoundingly applies Charles Dickens’ artful precept: “Make ’em laugh, make ’em cry, make ’em wait.” The fabric is just as absorbing as the fibre: it is Northern France, between Dunkirk and Lille, just a century ago, in the days when the region was still more Flemish than French. Like the Wessex of Thomas Hardy or the Tuscany of Carlo Cassola, the landscape (here town and sea) is never directly described: it is evoked indirectly through the way it is used by the people who move within it, including the aversion felt by a tangy Corsican customs inspector, aghast at his change of scene, for those pale yellow dunes, pale grey skies and bottle-green seas.

This is a land of beer and juniper gin, strings of dried whiting twirling in the wind, carnivals and giants, the people closer to those of Ostend and La Panne than to those of Amiens or Le Havre. They are sociable, hospitable people, much to the surprise of those travellers from further south who always feel that only southerners have warmth. But then, between Dunkirk and Lille dwell not so much the French of the North as the Flemings of the Midi.

Yet this *Flandre française* is not only the picturesque scenery of the shipyards seen building the last of the schooners destined for the Iceland fishing run; it is also the economic boom of those bygone days when France was fed by the North and governed by the South. It is a working class, still, around 1880, lacerated by the Commune; it is the first steps of an underground trade-union movement only on the threshold of legality; and it is a women’s condition still burdened by moral and intellectual segregation, even among the higher reaches of the bourgeoisie—the heroine is the brave exception whose efforts prove the rule, and cost her dear. Duquesne describes the impact of technological progress and the development of electricity as they turn production upside-down; he shows the widening rift between laity and clergy, and the heat of the resentments that fuelled the protracted contest whose curious ghost returned to haunt the French again last year. This was the age of tuberculosis omnipresent, taking its toll with equal ruthlessness in almost every household, all along the social scale. And already distant echoes sound from New Caledonia, as the deported “*communeux*” come home or remain and the Kanakas rise in rebellion.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to one of the minor characters in the novel, the pious lady of high Lillois society who is knocked down and injured by a horse-drawn tram, and makes the incredible vow to “be reconciled with all her enemies” if she should recover. All of them! Since the demon of politics is not to be exorcised, even when one is reading only for personal enjoyment, I found myself fascinated by the idea of the sublime programme this vow would make for Messrs Le Pen and Marchais! So superhuman a task would keep them busy until the end of their days—*mais quelle belle fin de vie!*

J.-F. R.

BOOKS & WRITERS

Embarrassing Relatives

Humans & Other Intelligent Animals—By MARY MIDGLEY

"He who understands baboon would do more towards metaphysics than Locke."

CHARLES DARWIN, *Notebooks*



A TIBETAN LAMA, who was explaining the transmigration of souls to an audience of New Yorkers, was met by an interesting difficulty. How (he was asked), if souls transmigrated, could human beings have increased their numbers so much in the last couple of centuries? Where did the extra souls come from for all these new people, and especially for all these new Americans? "Yes indeed", responded the lama with concern. "And have you ever wondered where all those buffaloes went to?"

Western thought has rather strongly resisted this kind of thinking. It has preferred, on the whole, to emphasise always the gap between our own species and others rather than the continuity. And once this was done, it has often been inclined to dismiss enquiry about the other species as somewhat perverse and trivial. This attitude runs counter to an important principle of scientific enquiry which forbids all such snobbish discrimination among subject-matters. J. B. S. Haldane, asked what motives his long biological experience led him to attribute to the Creator, replied "An inordinate fondness for beetles." Many Christian naturalists of the last century, such as Charles Kingsley and the young Darwin, would have accepted this notion with no sense of uneasiness. For them, the Lord was indeed glorified in all his creatures. Fuller study of any of them could only reveal further wonders, which would continually redound to his praise. But, when doubts were cast on the separate creation of man, this sense of harmonious coexistence began to seem dangerous. The notion of humanity as growing up on equal terms with its fellow-creatures and arising out of them, instead of being sent from above to rule them, shocked, and still does shock, the Western imagination in countless ways. Difficulty in accepting it has distorted many studies, but possibly none of them has been thrown into such grave

confusion by it as the study of animal intelligence. Its history during the past century deserves attention.

For Darwin, continuity between *Homo sapiens* and other animals was always a central theme. He hated the human conceit which systematically exaggerates our uniqueness, and saw it as a crucial source of dishonesty in the old religious tradition. To his mind, the first essential for attempting to understand scientifically our relation to other species was to conquer this seductive bias. It was not just that science in general always demands impartiality, but that in this case the way forward lay straight through a humiliating comparison from which religious belief had so far protected us. If indeed human beings had arisen from a matrix of other species, then the study of that matrix must surely be a most promising source of new light on human nature. And if our mental as well as our physical nature was to receive that light, then the mentality of other species must be taken seriously and studied in honest comparison with our own. While never doubting that the differences remained enormous, Darwin insisted that human beings, like any other mysterious item, would become more comprehensible if they were placed in a context of comparable entities, instead of being studied in the vacuum where past metaphysicians—including even scientifically-based ones such as Locke—had inevitably always seen them. So Darwin, though he had little time to pursue this study himself, called for it vigorously and left no doubt what he thought the interests of science demanded here. Animal thought must be studied, and studied seriously, without *a priori* prejudices which would ensure that it never looked like anything human. Beetles and baboons were no longer just a joke. The time had come to take them seriously.

THE UPSHOT OF THIS CALL was a strange one. Since Darwin, a great deal of psychological work has indeed, sooner or later, been done on various animals. The study of rats alone has absorbed an immense amount of laboratory space, time and money. But for a long time the dominant theme of most of it, especially in Britain and the United States, was that animals had scarcely any mental life at all. Directly contrary to Darwin, these investigators perceived the scientific spirit as demanding above all an economical, mechanistic, reductive explanation of animal behaviour, which would place it as far

away as possible from the subtleties traditionally ascribed to human action.

This policy was sharply expressed in Lloyd Morgan's famous canon of 1898, which ruled that "In no case may we interpret an action as the outcome of the exercise of a higher psychical faculty, if it can be interpreted as the outcome of one which stands lower in the psychological scale." The effect of that rule naturally varies according to what other principles you recognise, what alternative explanations you are prepared to consider plausible, and what you mean by "higher" and "lower"—vague terms which Darwin had always distrusted.

Lloyd Morgan applied his rule quite mildly. But in the 70 years that followed him, drastic interpretation of it was professionally enforced with sharp crusading zeal. It was then as much as any psychologist's career was worth to suggest that an animal in any way "reasoned", had "intentions", or "knew what it was doing." Terms like these, even when enclosed in shudder-quotes and brought in only for the sake of examination and analysis, were for much of that time damned as radically unscientific.

Changes like this in the current notion of science are hugely influential, yet those who make them seldom see fully what they involve. Darwin's notion of science was a positive one, concerned with ends. He thought of it centrally as the increase of understanding. His successors were moving towards a more negative notion, chiefly concerned with means. What chiefly struck them was the need to *avoid* ways of understanding which belonged to everyday life—to cut out vernacular methods of thinking.

Two processes going on at this time shaped this movement and gave it peculiar force. One was the professionalisation of science. Under T. H. Huxley, a stern battle was fought at the end of the century to replace the amateur gentleman-naturalists, such as Darwin and Lyell, by properly trained, salaried and specialised scientists—a term which only came into general use at that time.

The other was the dazzling success of classical physics. Unthreatened as yet by Einstein, this study seemed then to guarantee an understanding of the world, as certain and final as that offered earlier by religion, but set on a much firmer basis. It seemed about to furnish at last that final key to all the mysteries which Descartes had foretold—to reduce the world to mathematics. What was significantly called the "physical" universe was to be displayed as a vast machine, fully understandable in terms of its particles and the forces which bound them together. The methods of all other studies would then be shown up as only provisional; perhaps entirely superseded. No wonder that the emerging tribes of scientists were dazzled by this vision. For them, the distinguishing mark of their new professionalism quickly became an insistence on always using this esoteric way of explaining phenomena, and a dismissal of all others—especially everyday ones—as merely superficial.

This mistaken hope—now thoroughly exploded by physics—did a good deal of harm all over the biological field, but it was by a piece of quite gratuitous bad luck that it distorted psychology as well. The label "social science" happened to have been stuck on psychology, and on some other emerging studies, *before* words like "science" came to centre on the

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restrictive model of mechanistic physics. Had this not happened—had they, for instance, been classified, as they quite easily might have, as the neighbours of history and philosophy—there would have been no temptation for those psychologists who wanted to clinch their professional status to do so by inventing quasi-physical atoms of behaviour—tropisms, conditioned reflexes, responses to stimuli and the rest. There would have been no pressure to by-pass full observation, simplify description, and make always for some limited question which allowed of an experiment. Accordingly, there would not have been any need for animal psychology to get drawn into the strange role of providing, by hook and crook, support for the reductive quasi-physical theories—a role for which it was fitted partly by the general ignorance about it which made odd theories look more plausible there than they would have done for human beings, and partly, of course, because it was the only field where experimentation could go on freely without any reference to the wishes of its subjects.

THE FORCES MAKING FOR this use of animal psychology were strong enough to sweep the studies which Darwin had started right off the board. By another piece of bad luck, the man whom Darwin had hoped to leave as his heir to these enquiries, George Romanes, happened to be a thoroughly informal naturalist of Darwin's kind, but without his fierce mental disciplines. Romanes was easily dismissed as casual and "anecdotal." What was needed was someone able to combine this sort of wide curiosity with an increase in scientific rigour, and so develop a proper discipline of observing and interpreting animal behaviour, especially in the wild. In our century, this need has been met by Konrad Lorenz, Niko Tinbergen and their ethological colleagues.

At the turn of the century, nobody thought this possible. Quite a number of animal psychologists did protest that the complexity of their subject was somehow becoming lost and distorted, but they were borne down. The reducers could easily prevail merely by suggesting that those who wanted the complexity of the facts respected were anthropomorphic, sentimental, and "anecdotal." What is remarkable is that these accusations of bias seem always to have been one-sided. They were never aimed at the reducers. Yet the attractions of ruling that animals are hopelessly stupid machines, not comparable with people, were enormous. This course not only gratified a general human conceit and habit of exploitation. It had, for psychologists in particular, the further double advantage of qualifying them as members of the mechanistic scientific community, and also of demonstrating that it did not matter how they treated their experimental animals.

Obviously the fact that these inducements existed does not in itself show that theorists were moved by them. The point is just that, if irrelevant motives were always to be suspected on one side, they ought to have been on the other as well. But

they were not suspected because the reducers supposed themselves to be entirely moved by the ideal of parsimony expressed in Lloyd Morgan's canon.

They do not seem to have seen how tendentious that ideal was. If one approached human life in the same spirit, determined never to assume that higher faculties were at work where it was in any way possible to think that lower ones might be, one would reach some very odd conclusions and might reasonably be asked what on earth had made one start by laying the burden of proof in that strange place. It is not more economical to make one enormous initial assumption—such as that animals are simple machines—than it is to look for a variety of different explanations for the different aspects of complex phenomena. Initial probabilities have to be considered. People who actually work with animals—grooms, keepers, mahouts, hunters, shepherds—do not treat them as if they were simple machines, but assume that they are conscious fellow-creatures, viewing life basically in the same way as themselves, even though with very different faculties and with aims that may sometimes be hard to penetrate. It is only by allowing for that independent viewpoint and keeping it constantly in mind that they are able to do their work effectively and safely.

Reductive psychologists do not usually deny this, but they tend to treat it as just an anecdotal detail of everyday life, irrelevant to science. In this field, in fact, thorough experience of the subject-matter is held to be a positive disqualification for contributing data to the theorist. Or, to look at it another way, the real subject-matter is not held to be animals as such, but animals isolated under peculiarly sanitary and distorting conditions in the laboratory.

IN THE LAST FEW DECADES, all this has been changing fast. Ethological observations in the wild have shown that animals constantly do all sorts of things which they had been proved not to be able to do, and have also introduced useful conceptual schemes for describing and classifying these activities. Ten years back, one particularly bold psychologist, Donald Griffin, incorporated much of this material in an admirable book called *The Question of Animal Awareness*, firmly using every one of the taboo words, from Consciousness to Introspection, and showing the impossibility of talking sensibly on these matters without them. Though he provoked a lot of discussion, the lightning did not strike him, and by now a fair number of far-sighted rats (you should pardon the term) have begun to leave the reductive ship. He has lately brought out another and if possible even better book, called *Animal Thinking*,¹ exposing still more clearly the needless strangeness of the mechanistic position.

The dispute is certainly not over, and at present an extraordinary ambivalence reigns in the subject. Naturally it reflects the similar ambivalence that exists in human psychology, which once led an exasperated psychologist to remark to me that "Watson and Freud between them made it impossible to do psychology for 50 years"—a period which H. J. Eysenck and others are busily trying to prolong.

In animal psychology, however, the clash is much grosser, because the extremes lie even farther apart. It can be seen in

¹ *Animal Thinking*. By DONALD R. GRIFFIN. Harvard University Press, \$17.50, £14.95; paper \$7.95, £6.75.

a pure state, quite without any attempt to make sense of it, in a collection of papers called *Animal Intelligence*,² edited by L. Weiskrantz, Professor of Psychology, University of Oxford. Here, side by side, one finds discussions by people like the Gardners and Jane Goodall, who treat chimpanzees with scrupulous respect as intelligent fellow-creatures, and others by people whose way of investigating intelligence is to train monkeys in boring and pointless tasks, cut out pieces of their brains, and then see whether they do the tasks better or worse. It is clear that however intelligent the animal in question might be—even, for instance, if it were a human being under investigation on another planet—the second method would never reveal that fact, because the tasks provided have deliberately been split up into elements too simple to evoke any of the “higher faculties.”

² *Animal Intelligence*. Edited by L. WEISKRANTZ. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, £32.50.

If one actually wanted to grasp the whole range of those faculties—which is what the word “intelligence” suggests—one would do much better to join Jane Goodall at the descriptive end, or to read *Behind the Mirror* (1977), that splendid little book by Konrad Lorenz, where the meaning that should be attached to the idea of a conscious subject is explored right across the evolutionary scale, with invaluable breadth of reference both to scientific findings and to the grander human faculties. Or one could try Adrian Desmond’s excellent book *The Ape’s Reflexion* (1979), about the many different kinds of self-awareness found in different creatures.

It has to be admitted, however, that these surveys of a long, continuous scale of differences, not always classed as “higher” and “lower”, would not be as effective a way of providing a simple, cast-iron guarantee of human supremacy, nor of becoming sure that one would not be reborn as an experimental monkey. Where you start does tend to determine where you will end.

Echoes of Empire (IV)

Conrad & Caliban—By MICHAEL THORPE



“CONRAD DIED fifty years ago. In those fifty years his work has penetrated to many corners of the world which he saw as dark. It is a subject for Conradian meditation; it tells us something about our new world. Perhaps it doesn’t matter what we say about Conrad; it is enough that he is discussed.” With these words V. S. Naipaul, a distinguished writer

from that “new world”—a phenomenon Joseph Conrad did not imagine—closes his 1974 essay “Conrad’s Darkness.”¹ As the Thames which Marlow surveys in *Heart of Darkness* has been “the seed of commonwealths”,² so Conrad the displaced Pole, with a deep, inherited consciousness of imperialist oppression, creative writer in his third language, whose fiction aspired beyond one society or the Western world to a universal vision, has become a model or shaping influence for five of the foremost post-colonial writers: V. S. Naipaul, the black Barbadian novelist George Lamming, the African English novelists Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, and the Guyanese Wilson Harris.

Their ancestors in Conrad’s masterpiece of verbal ambivalence, *Heart of Darkness*, have little English—“Catch

’im, eat ’im” or “Mistah Kurtz, he dead” is the measure of it. Indeed, it is their “wild and passionate uproar” against which Marlow pits his superior verbal mode:

“An appeal to me in this fiendish row—is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice, too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced.”

But the unforeseen and immeasurable gift of Empire was the coloniser’s “speech”: as George Lamming puts it, “the deepest and most delicate bond of involvement. It has a certain finality, Caliban will never be the same again. Nor, for that matter, will Prospero.”³

As, barely a generation ago, few expected the African colonies to become independent, fewer imagined that the “gabble” of Caliban would ever be refined into Prospero’s tongue. Chinua Achebe, walking to the campus at the start of the 1975 academic year at the University of Massachusetts, chatted with a white stranger who asked him what he did. “I was a teacher. What did I teach? African literature. Now that was funny, he said, because he never had thought of Africa as having that kind of stuff, you know.”⁴

It was a natural response: African and Caribbean writers in English have become a voice only since their countries’ independence in the late 1950s and early ’60s. The first generation is now middle-aged, old enough to have experienced both the oppression of colonial power and its opportunities—to graduate from English-style universities in their own country or, like Naipaul, to study in England, usually in the humanities. They know what it is to live between two worlds, to inherit both and belong fully to neither. I have referred to them as Caliban’s descendants; they would not be offended because for them the Prospero-

¹ V. S. Naipaul, “Conrad’s Darkness”, in *The Return of Eva Peron* (1980, Penguin 1981), p. 218.

² *Heart of Darkness* quotations are included throughout without edition or page reference.

³ George Lamming, *Pleasures of Exile* (1963), p. 109.

⁴ Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa”, *The Massachusetts Review* (Winter 1977), p. 782.

Caliban relationship is the paradigm of their situation and their history.

Students of this phenomenon are indebted to O. Mannoni's *La Psychologie de la Colonisation* (1950; translated as *Prospero and Caliban*, 1956). A lucid application of his insights to English colonial history and English literature can be found in *Prospero's Magic*, by Philip Mason, who read English at Cambridge in Quiller-Couch's time. As Mason notes, Quiller-Couch "identifies Prospero with Shakespeare", but whereas "We, today, like Prospero best when he is renouncing his magic . . . Quiller-Couch likes him all the time and without question." "Our" reading discovers a repulsive "Prospero complex"—the jealous father, the dogmatic authoritarian, the voice of a consciously superior race—and familiar antithetical native types in Ariel, "the good native, the moderate nationalist, the gradualist . . . content to wait until it pleases Prospero to give him his freedom", and in Caliban (our "hero" these days) "the bad native, the nationalist, the extremist—the man who will be Prime Minister after independence."⁵ Or, we might add, the thief of Prospero's true magic:

when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known. . . .

Following Dryden, Lamming and Mason rather than Frank Kermode, I ascribe these words from *The Tempest* to Prospero, not Miranda. Howbeit, it is clearly Caliban who replies:

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. . . .

Must we then curse Shakespeare too? As the Sinhalese critic D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke has recognised,⁶ we can draw no conclusion about Shakespeare's position on colonialism (how *could* he have had one?); but, as Professor Kermode, pointing to the antithetical views of the native prevalent in Shakespeare's sources and time "as purely virtuous or purely vicious", aptly remarks: "the latter view . . . suits best the conscience of the colonist."⁷

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan novelist, naturally also thinks it more fitting that the disputed lines in *The Tempest* should belong to Prospero; in his 1969 essay "Towards a National Culture", he puts the viewpoint of Caliban emancipated:

"Prospero, the stranger on the island, comes with the soft voice of the serpent. He is at first friendly with Caliban, and flatters him, but all the time he is learning the secrets

of the island. To him Caliban has no culture or meaningful past. He has even given *his* language to Caliban. And before Caliban knows it, Prospero has taken his land, has set up a one-man government, and turns Caliban into a slave-labourer. Ariel, formerly Caliban's subject, is released from bondage into a new servitude: he will only be finally freed if he remains Prospero's faithful servant and spy.

Like Prospero, the European coloniser instinctively knew and feared the threat posed by men with confidence in their own past and heritage. Why else should he devote his military might, his religious fervour, and his intellectual energy to denying that the African had true gods, had a culture, had a significant past? The missionary attacked the primitive rites, the dances, the graven images, recoiling from their suggestion of satanic sensuality. Some of the best minds of Europe abetted this grand deception."⁸

Among such minds Ngugi accuses, as others have, Hegel (quoting the Introduction to the West-biased *Philosophy of History*) and Karen Blixen, who spent many patrician years in Kenya. He could have added Arnold Toynbee, who in his *Study of History* found "no indigenous civilisation in Africa", and H. G. Wells, who reveals no knowledge of Black African civilisation in his *Outline of History*. Such reductions abet another simplification: Africa as the raw state we have emerged from, if only—this may be granted with dubious humility—yesterday. Thus Marlow recognising a "remote kinship" with the screaming savage, the cautionary tales of whites' reversion ("going native") for which Kurtz is prototype, or the scab-scratching of the Westerner alienated from civilisation, as in Graham Greene's *Journey Without Maps* (1936): a journey "a stage further back", for

"when one sees to what unhappiness, to what peril of extinction centuries of cerebration have brought us, one sometimes has a curiosity to discover if one can from what we have come, to recall at which point we went astray."

Greene shares, with explicit acknowledgement, Marlow's "fascination of the abomination."

IN THESE EXAMPLES we see not Africa, but Africa through Western eyes. From a contemporary African viewpoint, as Chinua Achebe puts it in words that echo Greene's, the African writer's task is to illuminate his despised or distorted past, to discover "where the rain first began to beat us."⁹ From the Western viewpoint Africa is symbolic—of our primal origins, the "macrocosmic psyche",¹⁰ freedom from the restraint of civilised order and the testing-ground of civilised conduct. To the African it has always been a real place to live, which had before colonialism developed its own social and cultural matrix and values. The one sees from without (even if he plunges in); the other is inside and, looking out, is confronted with biased images of what he is and has been.

In *The Tempest* Caliban's heirs fail to discern that "spirit of reconciliation" dear to Western critics—in so far as they face

⁵ Philip Mason, *Prospero's Magic* (1962), p. 93, 81, 88.

⁶ D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, *Developing Countries in British Fiction* (1977), p. 21.

⁷ Frank Kermode, Introduction to *The Tempest*, Arden Shakespeare (1954), pp. xxv-vi.

⁸ Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming* (1972), pp. 8-9.

⁹ Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher", in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), p. 44.

¹⁰ Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, *The Africa That Never Was* (New York, 1970), p. 107.

the issue at all rather than withdraw behind the abstract interpretation of Caliban as the "vegetative" part of the soul. But *The Tempest* pre-dates colonialism; *Heart of Darkness* is a more challenging and far more ambivalent case. It seems that anything can be made of it: it is *the* anti-imperialist novel (though some think it absolves English imperialism), while in many subtle white commentaries it seems hardly concerned with colonialism at all, or with Africa and Africans. A dominant reading, among many that are, as Jacques Berthoud notes, "irrational and self-indulgent",¹¹ is to interpret it as allegorical of "the journey within." The darkness is what persists, ineradicably, within us—the *id*, the pre-civilised self, with which we must come to terms, "naming" it, as Kurtz does, "The horror! The horror!" In inspiring this universalist interpretation, Conrad decisively shifted the perspective in which Africa was viewed and it became "the dark mystery that lay coiled about the very soul of man."¹²

But is it truly "Man"? Interpretation depends on perception: imagine white responses to a universally read and highly influential African work in which the heart of whiteness symbolised the pre-civilised self. Yet Third World writers have not combined to curse Conrad. Lamming, Ngugi and Wilson Harris hail him, with minor reservations, as a forerunner. Naipaul wholeheartedly endorses Conrad's vision

and fictional method; his latest novel, *A Bend in the River*, is the offspring of *Heart of Darkness*. Chinua Achebe, a novelist of comparable eminence in the Third World to Conrad in ours, has mounted Caliban's counter-attack. In two unsparing polemics he castigates both Conrad and Naipaul, the Trinidadian Oxonian of Indian descent, whom he sees as adulated in the West. In the first, delivered at a Berlin festival and reprinted in the *The Times Literary Supplement* (1 February 1980), he dismisses the "monologue" of *Heart of Darkness* as "foolishly sensational and pretentious . . . it fortifies fears and prejudices and is clever enough to protect itself, should the need arise, with the excuse that it is not really about Africa at all." Naipaul is kicked in the rear of the piece for having recently announced that Africa "has no future", and is labelled a "literary guru, a smart restorer of the old comforting myths of [the white] race."

ONE CAN UNDERSTAND Achebe's exasperation. Conrad spent barely six months in Africa, on or near the Congo. Compared to, say, Graham Greene—not to mention the formidable explorers of the 19th-century interior—he was little more than a tourist. Where *Heart of Darkness* does offer, through Marlow's narration, insight into Africa, the African or African life, it is fragmentary, sensational and prejudiced—that life glimpsed, as it were, from the margin, scarcely beyond the limiting banks of the river. The images—of capering dancers, rolling eyeballs,

¹¹ Jacques Berthoud, *Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase* (1978), p. 41, n. 1.

¹² Hammond and Jablow, *The Africa That Never Was*, p. 107.

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"unspeakable" obscene rites—melodramatically answer the expectations of what J. C. Echeruo has called "the conditioned imagination."¹³ Recently, white critics have undertaken to interpret and render concrete¹⁴ those "unspeakable rites" upon which F. R. Leavis complained that Conrad had laid an "adjectival and worse than supererogatory insistence."¹⁵ Significantly, Achebe's fictional riposte to *Heart of Darkness* twice alludes to this sensational passage. First there is this, on p. 106 of *No Longer at Ease* (1960), on Mr Green, the government officer:

"He must have come originally with an ideal—to bring light to the heart of darkness, to tribal head-hunters performing weird ceremonies and unspeakable rites. But when he arrived, Africa played him false. Where was the beloved bush full of human sacrifice?"

A passage (p. 36) in a later novel, *Arrow of God* (1964), focuses upon the apprehensions of Captain T. K. Winterbottom. Though a "hardened coaster" fifteen years in Africa:

"He would wonder what unspeakable rites went on in the forests at night, or was it the heart-beat of the African darkness? Then one night he was terrified when it suddenly occurred to him that no matter where he lay awake at night in Nigeria the beating of the drums came with the same constancy and from the same elusive distance. Could it be that the throbbing came from his own heat-stricken brain?"

The irony is sharper here, but perhaps Conrad is less its target than a loose reading of him. Not only does Achebe reject the simplistic yoking of the savage and the African, he mocks at the romantic image of Kurtz's barbaric, queenly mistress which appeals positively to many Western readers. Even so usually temperate a critic as Ian Watt, who acknowledges that "Conrad habitually uses the derogatory racial terms which were general in . . . his time", singles her out as "the most affirmative image in the narrative, the embodiment of the confident natural energy of the African wilderness."¹⁶ Yet this "embodiment" is a stereotyped fantasy which Conrad shares with lesser romantics like John Buchan and Rider Haggard. Inevitably, we counterpoint this "affirmative image" of the Noble Sexy Savage against that of Kurtz's Intended, whom Marlow (less "affirmative") shields from knowledge of Kurtz's immersion in sensual darkness. Marlow is a puritan apostle of female purity, as reticent in his protection of the Intended as any prudent Victorian novelist. Achebe plausibly identifies Conrad's attitude with his narrator's here:

¹³ J. C. Echeruo, *The Conditioned Imagination from Shakespeare to Conrad* (1978).

¹⁴ A notable exception is M. M. Mahood, *The Colonial Encounter* (1977), p. 31.

¹⁵ F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (1948; N.Y., 1954), p. 218.

¹⁶ Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (1980), pp. 159, 138.

¹⁷ Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa", p. 786 (cf. Ian Watt, *Conrad* . . . , p. 251, for a differing view).

¹⁸ Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism* (1983), p. 37; Wilson Harris, *Fossil and Psyche* (1974), p. 7.

"The Amazon [Achebe writes] is drawn in considerable detail, albeit of a predictable nature, for two reasons. First, she is in her place and so can win Conrad's special brand of approval; and second, she fulfils a structural requirement of the story; she is a savage counterpart to the refined, European woman with whom the story will end."¹⁷

While one would add to this that Conrad allows the darkness to shadow the Intended's ignorant idealism, Marlow nevertheless defers to "the faith that was in her, before that great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness"—a passage which, as Benita Parry has commented, is "not undercut by the ironies" that deflate such illusions in the earlier part of the narrative. Wilson Harris also locates Marlow's (and implicitly Conrad's) failure here: "All [Marlow] seems able to do is to fall back upon a fetish of truth in the form of a compassionate lie to the woman who worships Kurtz."¹⁸

ACHEBE FURTHER COMPLAINS of the impossibility of judging how far Conrad can be dissociated from Marlow's wilderness mythology:

"If Conrad's intention is to draw a *cordon sanitaire* between himself and the moral and psychological malaise of his narrator, his care [is] totally wasted because he neglects to hint however subtly or tentatively at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characters."

Jacques Darras, in *Joseph Conrad and the West: Signs of Empire* (1982), warns us that:

"We must not identify [Marlow's] words, that is to say the moments when he interrupts his narrative to comment upon it and to meditate upon it himself, with those of the author. . . . It is in the *silence* of the text that, by reading between the lines, we can see."

This is an evasive defence, and Jacques Darras does not substantiate it. If Achebe recognises the ironic distance Conrad sometimes hints by manipulating the "I" narrator between himself and Marlow, this is insufficient to allay a concern that the African image remains overwhelmingly demonic. (It seems, incidentally, clearer in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* that there is no distance between the author and the narrator's repulsion from Wait's "mask of a nigger's soul.") More tolerant of Conrad's stance is Goonetilleke's plausible suggestion that Marlow as narrator is a mask for Conrad's limited knowledge and insight. Ian Watt argues more boldly that Conrad's use of the "derogatory racial terms" current in his time "might pose a serious problem if *Heart of Darkness* were essentially concerned with the colonial and racial issue in general. But it is not . . . Conrad was primarily concerned with the colonisers."

THIS SEEMS A FAIR EMPHASIS and it is recognised by the Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Remarking upon Achebe's indictment of Conrad, he sees that

Achebe only grudgingly acknowledges Conrad's unmasking of colonialism. Singling out the "skulls stuck on poles outside Kurtz's house", he comments that "No African writer [has] created so ironic, apt and powerful an image."¹⁹ As apt, one might add, as the "idol" of a redemptive idea ("the civilising mission") that the modern colonialist, unlike the Roman, "can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to." If he depicts Africa as the familiar conventional symbol of dark "savagery", Conrad points out ironically how thoroughly the civilisers are at home there. It is a moot point how far Conrad wished to portray Kurtz as degraded to savagery; white commentaries usually assume so, and the psychic affinities between James Wait (the Nigger of the *Narcissus*) and Kurtz support such a view. Nevertheless, Conrad's narrative does show that the whites imported their own barbarities into Leopold's Congo. There is ample historical evidence—and we may compare the black historian C. L. R. James's *Black Jacobins* (1938), the appalling narrative of the atrocities inflicted upon their human property by French slave-owners, or, in those patches of "red" on the map, the deliberate extermination of the "brutes" of Tasmanian aborigines and the Beothuks of Newfoundland.

Marlow does stress the Africans' common humanity: "what thrilled you", he recalls in terms Conrad's contemporary readers could not easily accept, "was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar." Yet the key word is "remote"—and since, in Achebe's phrase, "no alternative frame of reference" is provided, contemporary reviewers could read the novel both as consonant with social Darwinism and as a realistic treatment of a familiar theme, the flawed white man's backsliding when cut off from the restraints of civilisation. Conrad's analysis was more radical: he suggested that the bad traits of the colonial were not acquired in the colonies. In Mannoni's words, they were "already in existence in a latent and repressed form in the European psyche, traits which the colonial experience has simply brought to the surface and made manifest."²⁰ Kurtz ("all Europe had contributed to his making") evolves from humane civiliser to Nietzschean Anti-Christ.

Achebe is more concerned with justice to Africa than to Conrad. To restore the balance, or enlarge the "frame of reference", one might turn to *The Secret Agent*. There, the hollowness of civilised structures and values, and Conrad's insight that atavistic urges persist barely beneath the surface of life in London—the heart of an Empire on which the sun never sets, the city over which (as Marlow's narrative begins) a "mournful gloom" hangs—produce by insistent imagery and symbolism a Western heart of darkness. Society women recline in broughams upon "the skin of a wild beast", the speaking-tubes behind the chair of the Assistant Commissioner at Scotland Yard writhe like snakes; Stevie's exploded remains are compared to a "cannibal feast"; his sister, Winnie, avenges him with "the simple ferocity of the

¹⁹ Quoted in C. P. Sarvan, "Racism and *Heart of Darkness*", *International Fiction Review* (Winter 1980), p. 9.

²⁰ O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban* (trans. Powesland, 1956; 1964), p. 97.

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age of caverns and the unbalanced nervous fury of the age of bar-rooms"; Conrad ironises upon the negroid features of the racist pseudo-scientist Comrade Ossipon. If Africa had been a foil to him in *Heart of Darkness*, and Brussels a sketch for darkest London, Conrad could portray in *The Secret Agent* a Western world which has savagery within. As Yeats would, he had learnt that:

*All men are dancers, and their feet
Go to the barbarous clangour of the gong . . .*

but here—as also in the “frenzied drum” of “A Prayer for my Daughter”, the corrosive, fecund, African darkness that undermines Skrebensky in Lawrence’s *The Rainbow*, or in the mind-dissolving fetishes Birkin recognises in *Women in Love*—if civilisation suffers from heart-disease, it is still Africa that supplies the conditioned, symptomatic imagery of its degeneration. Thus, *The Secret Agent* continues the late-Victorian tradition where, in such works as J. Compton Ricketts’ *The Quickening of Caliban* (1893), Africa supplies ready metaphors for London’s East End depravity or Belgravan decadence.

ACHEBE SET HIMSELF to create in his own fiction the “alternative frame of reference” which Conrad’s lacks, opposing a more positively recreated African, or more strictly Nigerian, past to the darkly symbolic Africa which *Heart of Darkness* epitomises and which he refuses to accept simply as territory for exploration of the white psyche. In his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), he is adept at Conradian irony. If we recall the context of the Yeats poem from which he draws his title, it becomes evident that “mere anarchy” fits the law-giving superior breeds, the colonisers. Like *The Secret Agent*, which systematically undermines simplistic opposition between anarchic nihilism and establishmentarian order, *Things Fall Apart* is a minefield of surprising ironic juxtaposition and counterpoint. We recognise as “civilised” the “primitive” tribe’s elaborate diplomatic evasion of excessive bloodshed, their annual Week of Peace and their taboo against a “war of blame”: “barbarous” are the whites’ massacre of a whole village on market day in reprisal for the killing of a missionary, and the treacherous arrest and humiliation of a voluntarily unarmed delegation of village elders. (Such acts are fully documented in Elizabeth Isichei’s *The Ibo People and the Europeans*, 1973.) The first part of the novel, which recreates in no merely ideal terms (“unspeakable rites” included) the traditional life, beliefs and values of the Igbo people before the English penetration of their heartland, is a portrayal of what, like the colonisers, Conrad not only did not know, but failed to imagine (though he had allowed his Malays some social values). It is worth digressing here to note that among the things *Captain* Conrad may not have known is that in 1856, the year before he was born, an African trained off the

Nigerian coast “had charge of a Sierra Leonean schooner engaged in the coastal trade” and later became a fully-fledged captain; several others followed him in the 1860s while Conrad was still a landlocked boy.²¹ In Achebe’s Africa at least (there were, and are, many Africas), the value of Towson’s *Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship* was probably grasped by African readers a generation before *Heart of Darkness* was written.

IN ACHEBE’S *HEART OF DARKNESS* we recognise a kindred humanity, not in our savage buried origins, but in the very capacity for kinship and community which is, indeed, a prime value in Conrad’s work; this extends, significantly, to a capacity to question and change outworn custom which, Brian Street notes in *The Savage in Literature* (1975), was conveniently considered impossible for the primitive. In this passage, opening Chapter 11 of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), we find a calculated contrast, pointing towards a positive centre, with, as the Nigerian critic J. C. Echeruo puts it, the “not ordinarily symbolic”, but “peculiarly African and foreign”²² setting of Conrad’s novel:

“The night was impenetrably dark. The moon had been rising later and later every night until now it was seen only at dawn. And whenever the moon forsook evening and rose at cock-crow the nights were as black as charcoal.

Ezinma and her mother sat on a mat on the floor after their supper of yam foo-foo and bitter-leaf soup. A palm-oil lamp gave out yellowish light. Without it, it would have been impossible to eat; one could not have known where one’s mouth was in the darkness of that night. There was an oil lamp in all the four huts on Okonkwo’s compound, and each hut seen from the others looked like a soft eye of yellow half-light set in the solid massiveness of the night.

The world was silent except for the shrill cry of insects, which was a part of the night, and the sound of wooden mortar and pestle as Nwayieke pounded her foo-foo. Nwayieke lived four compounds away, and she was notorious for her late cooking. Every woman in the neighbourhood knew the sound of Nwayieke’s mortar and pestle. It was also part of the night.”

The symbolic light, the understated domestic images are a characteristic Achebean countervalue. The understatement can be too effective: a fellow African writer, the Kenyan Peter Nazareth, is misled so far as simply to cite the first sentence, “The night was impenetrably dark”, as endorsing the Conradian viewpoint.

WHAT I HAVE SAID SO FAR, and the attention I have given Achebe’s critique, is meant to suggest that we should enlarge our critical perspectives to encompass a “Third World” view of such sensitive works as *Heart of Darkness* and *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”*. Both these works, which Africans find hard to read with critical detachment, can still be discussed at length by white critics who reveal no sensitivity to such reactions as this (again

²¹ J. F. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891* (1965), pp. 145-6.

²² J. C. Echeruo, *Joyce Cary and the Novel of Africa* (1973), p. 8.

understated) comment by the Nigerian writer J. P. Clark, on Wait's "tragic, mysterious . . . repulsive mask of a nigger's soul": "masks, by the way, can be white, yellow or brown, reflective of all manners of spirits, and those need not be black to be tragic, mysterious, repulsive and possessed of any grade of soul." Achebe's criticisms demand attention both because of his pre-eminent position among African writers and because he is surely right to see Conrad's as "the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination."²³

If other Third World writers, who, like him, have sought to restore African claims to humanity by rehabilitating the pre-colonial past, have been less agitated about Conrad, it may be because they are less sharply aware of Western insensitivity than the much-travelled Achebe. But there is a deeper dimension, masked in Achebe's polemic (he is not unaware of it), and here Conrad comes more positively into his own. Under the stresses and failures of Independence, Third World writers have quickly turned from righting colonial wrongs to disenchantment with their new order and searching self-exploration. Peter Nazareth considers that the world of *Nostromo* resembles that of African society today; Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), his bitter satire upon Nigerian political corruption, owes more to Conrad's political vision than simply its ironic title. So far as I know, Achebe has not acknowledged influence, but others have. The stylistic influence is strongest in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, whom I cited as defending Conrad against Achebe. In plot, narrative structure, characterisation, and complex motivation, his *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) is heavily indebted to *Under Western Eyes*. He has commented in an interview: "With Conrad, I'm impressed by the way he questions things, requestions things like action, the morality of action. . . ."²⁴

Ngugi pays Conrad the tribute of clear imitation when he creates, in *A Grain of Wheat*, a Kurtz-like District Commissioner who undergoes during the Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya a transformation from remote idealist to wielder of power by "savage" means. In Ngugi's sketch of Thompson as youthful idealist we recall Marlow's allusion to the redeeming "idea" of the English colonist. Thompson's "destiny dressed in the form of an idea", "a great light . . . in the darkness", had been that "to be English was basically an attitude of mind: it was a way of looking at life, at human relationship, at the just ordering of human society"; he would make his Africans "English." He entitles his credo "Prospero in Africa", but this document, like Kurtz's "On the Suppression of Savage Customs", is corrupted by the necessities of action. In the novel Thompson's responsibility for the death of eleven African detainees at Rira Camp clearly represents the actual Hola Camp incident of 1959. "Exterminate the brutes. . . ." However, not only Thompson and the whites are subjected to ironic Conradian deflation. The dry light of

Conradian scepticism exposes among the blacks individual and communal delusions and betrayals, measures the moral cost of radical and violent change, relentlessly probes simple black-and-white opposition.

WILSON HARRIS, the Guyanese novelist who has lived and published in London since 1960, argues against Achebe's sweeping "dismissal" of *Heart of Darkness* in his essay "The Frontier on which *Heart of Darkness* Stands."²⁵ While sympathising with Achebe's feeling, he deplores his narrow perspective and points to Conrad's "crucial parody of the properties of established order that mask corruption in all societies, black and white. . . ." He adds, parenthetically, "in this context one is not speaking only of conquistadorial monolith but of mankind the hunter whose folklore is death." The time has come, evidently, to move beyond colonial sensitivity and say "you also" or "we all."

Earlier, Harris had recognised in Achebe's Igbo people's history "a terrifying example of the engulfment which can suddenly overtake a people within a trauma of helplessness—external conquest, internal collapse. There is reason to believe that the earliest forms of tragic art were born out of the necessity to compensate such losses in the human psyche."²⁶ Despite this recognition, the novelist's task has never been for Harris primarily one of historical rehabilitation (such as Achebe sketches in "The Novelist as Teacher"), but "to cross the frontier upon which [Conrad's] intuitive imagination had arrived"—a frontier upon which Harris sees him as frozen in despair. Hence the visionary apotheosis of his own *Palace of the Peacock*, a novel of exploration into the heart of Guyana which pushes beyond Conrad's "frontier" or Marlow's "choice of nightmares." For Harris, beyond Conrad's ironies, though Guyana had also been "one of the dark places", "El Dorado is . . . a theme that could be transformed into a quest for wholeness." Thus, his passage to the unknown is a venture through a darkness that involves the "historical conditions of ego dignity that bind us to a particular decade, or generation or century", to an illuminated vision of community.²⁷ Harris leaves Conrad and Achebe behind, resolving temporal conflict and stultifying opposition in a visionary narrative that finally demands the assent of faith.

IF CONRAD HAS a true disciple among Caliban's descendants, it is V. S. Naipaul, the Indian novelist from Trinidad, which he calls "one of the Conradian dark places of the earth." As I have noted, Achebe attacks him as bitterly as he does Conrad. Though he had not read it, Achebe, in his *Times Literary Supplement* "Viewpoint", dismissed Naipaul's new novel, *A Bend in the River*, as "the work of a smart restorer of the old comforting myths of [the white] race." Naipaul had rashly said in an interview, "Africa has no future." If Conrad's African novel could seem to Achebe the product of a shipboard acquaintance with Leopold's Congo, Naipaul's—set in Zaïre, the Congo's independent successor which the Belgians abandoned

²³ J. P. Clark, *The Example of Shakespeare* (1970), pp. 14, 792.

²⁴ Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, in *African Writers Talking* (ed. Duerden and Pieterse, 1972), p. 124.

²⁵ In *Research in African Literatures* (Spring 1981), Vol. 12, No. 1.

²⁶ Wilson Harris, "Interior of the Novel", in *National Identity* (ed. K. Goodwin, 1970), p. 145.

²⁷ Wilson Harris, Interview with M. Fabre, *Kunapipi* (1980), Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 103.

precipitately in 1960—is at least the work of one who travelled in Zaïre with an acute eye for its present condition and an experienced insight into the nature of a colonial past. The novel incorporates numerous details and observations from Naipaul's 1975 essay, "A New King for the Congo: Mobutu and the Nihilism of Africa." One can apply to Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* his comment on *Heart of Darkness*: it "breaks into two. There is the reportage about the Congo. . . . And there is the fiction", in which "the idea, deliberately worked out, remains an applied idea." The "idea" is markedly Conradian: the "horror" is anarchy, the vision an unattainable one of order and community. Harris would doubtless categorise it as a Naipaulian "novel of persuasion", which analyses and defines within historicist bounds, offering no liberating vision, reiterating Conrad's "despair."

The novel's argument is not, contrary to what Achebe might have assumed, simply that Zaïre has reverted to primitivism after the short-lived order imposed by white civilisation. Naipaul sees that civilisation as always a poor export, "perishable" and inadequate. The bloody rebellion of Pierre Mulele, a former Minister of Education, is likened to Conrad's fantasy of the degenerate Kurtz:

"But the man with 'the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith and no fear' was black, not white; and he had been maddened not by contact with wilderness and primitivism, but with the civilisation established by those pioneers who now lie on Mont Ngaliema, above the Kinshasa rapids."

The antidote to the white infection has, Naipaul argues, been "the alibi of the past", but:

"The past has vanished. Facts in a book cannot by themselves give people a sense of history. Where so little has changed, where bush and river are so overwhelming, another past is accessible, better answering African bewilderment and African religious beliefs: the past as 'le bon vieux temps de nos ancêtres.'"²⁸

NAIPAUL HAS NOT reported on Achebe's Africa, but the "alibi" is not unknown there. Achebe's own fiction is most assured when recreating the past in images that redress Western distortions, but since 1966 when the Nigerian civil war broke out there have been only war stories and war poems, no mastering vision of the present. Understandably he deplores Naipaul's negativism and lumps him with those Westerners who see in the savageries of Independent Africa their worst prophecies confirmed. To them he can do little

more now than retort, "*Tu quoque*"; while for Naipaul, "traitor to the Third World", there is, alas, the racist sneer—"literary guru. . . ." Yet in Naipaul, as in Conrad, the wide-ranging reader will find little comfort for black or white. Though Naipaul's ideas of order are rooted in Western thought—and are thus bound to seem disturbingly reminiscent of 19th-century alibis for imperialism—he exposes the West's materialistic "emissaries", even less equivocally than Conrad, as lacking nerve, conviction, and moral authority. One may set beside Marlow's often-quoted comment on the map's "vast amount of red, good to see . . . because one knows some real work is done there", Naipaul's caustic irony in this passage from *The Loss of El Dorado* (1969):

"In 1807 one of the objections from Trinidad to the abolition of the British slave trade was that it was unfair to the Africans, who would now not only be denied civilising contacts but would also be transported in cruel conditions in foreign ships. The argument, with its remote reference to several ideals, is recognisably English."

It is a pity that Naipaul did not transfer to the published essay this rounder condemnation from his diary kept during his Zaïre journey: "The great stupidity of imperialism which ensured its disappearance and corrupted the humanities of the colonising country" (*A Congo Diary*, Los Angeles, 1980).

Prejudiced readers, or black writers like Chinua Achebe and George Lamming, who see in Naipaul only disparagement of their race,²⁹ overlook such even-handed ironies. More recently, white critics too have begun to label him "conservative", "reactionary", even "anti-imperialist imperialist"—terms that could also be made to fit Conrad. Naipaul's critical exploration of the "world's half-made societies", combined with a routine invocation of Western ideals of social order and responsibility, of "the idea of a contract between man and man",³⁰ has not been tempered by an extension of his vivisection mode of enquiry into the condition of England (where he has now spent more years than in Trinidad). It is at least arguable that his critique of Third World societies rests upon a "hierarchical value-structure" as between "Western civilisation and the rest."³¹ Though, like Conrad in *The Secret Agent*, he can expose the shallowness of English liberal tolerance and pragmatism, Naipaul shrinks from cutting to the English heart. It would, to use Marlow's words, be "too dark—too dark altogether. . . ." Both exiles, they chose England as a comparatively ordered centre. After this, it is a piquant irony to find Achebe directing against his own society the recent bitter broadside, *The Trouble With Nigeria* (1983), deriding the "false image" of national pride and advocating the values of restraint, discipline, and selfless communal spirit for which he finds himself compelled to turn to Western example. Nigerian civilisation, too, is "half-made."

IN THE FLUCTUATING DIALOGUE with Conrad one finds a signal exception to the impression of the young Naipaul, that English literature is "talking to itself."³² Obviously Conrad is a Western, rather than an English writer. He wrote in his

²⁸ V. S. Naipaul, "Conrad's Darkness", pp. 205, 214, 188, 191, 184 (cf. "That Indian Past! That fantasy of wholeness and purity, confusing the present!", *India: A Wounded Civilization*, 1977, p. 143).

²⁹ For Lamming's view, see *Pleasures of Exile*, pp. 225, 208.

³⁰ V. S. Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, p. 45.

³¹ George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle* (1971), p. 65.

³² V. S. Naipaul, *The Overcrowded Barracoon* (1972), p. 28.

third language, and felt little more at ease than Naipaul in writing about English society. "Human history" was his larger concern. Out of the darker reaches of that history since he died have sprung writers "with flatter noses", many of whom, writing in uneasy exile, naturally define themselves in relation to him. In the words of Peter Nazareth, "the task of smashing up the dome"—Nazareth's image of the "invisible cage" which colonialism imposed upon its world—"to let light through [was] begun in literature by Conrad."³³ This is so, although he himself contributed to those distorting images of the dark, other, externalised savagery, thrown up by the tradition: Caliban, Man Friday, Uncle Tom, Mister Johnson, John Buchan's Laputa, the Nigger of the *Narcissus* have

³³ Peter Nazareth, "Out of Darkness: Conrad and Other Third World Writers", *Conradiana* (1982), Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 184.

³⁴ Derek Walcott, "The Muse of History", in Edward Baugh (ed.), *Critics on Caribbean Literature* (1978), p. 184.

³⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus", *Stand*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1962), p. 5.

³⁶ Derek Walcott, "At Last", *Sea Grapes* (1976), p. 88.

deeply conditioned the white imagination. Inevitably, Third World writers have "punished" such images, to borrow a phrase from Auden's Yeats elegy, "under a foreign code of conscience." They combat insular fantasies, ingrown stereotypes, partial views of the human which we can no longer afford. Conrad more than glimpsed this, and struggled to emerge from the darkness of ethnocentric consciousness. At the same time, the West Indian poet Derek Walcott has warned, "the Medusa of the New World" is the confrontation with history: the colonised victim's temptation is "to accuse great art as feudalism and excuse poor art as suffering."³⁴ Achebe commits the first error, but not the second: the exaltation of *Négritude*, "the anti-racist racism" which Sartre preached as necessary for black liberation,³⁵ is not typical of the English Third World literatures. The relations I have sketched show that Prospero and Caliban can achieve reconciliation; or rather, that there are no Prosperos, no Kurtzes. Caliban must come to terms with himself. "Can you hear the achievement", asks Walcott, "Of this chimpanzee typing?"³⁶

Carry On, Culture

Private Thoughts & Public Funding—By JOHN PRESS



A RESEARCH WORKSHOP was held in Munich in November 1983 under the auspices of the Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe. John Myerscough of the Policy Studies Institute has edited a dozen of the Workshop papers and published them, together with 29 statistical tables, under the title *Funding the Arts in Europe*.¹

Prospective readers should be warned that the book is not easy reading. Its main appeal will be to those who are responsible for giving or receiving money for the arts from public funds.

The non-expert may derive pleasure from speculating about odd facts, tucked away in the tables, that receive no comment in the text. We find on p. xvi a kind of league table showing public expenditure on the arts per head in six European countries. Sweden wins the championship with £24.82, closely followed by France, Austria, and West Germany; while Italy, with £7.54, just pips the United Kingdom, holders of the wooden spoon with £5.80. One asks whether these dis-

parities reflect national wealth, public concern with the arts, or achievements in that sphere. Can the Swedes point to anything to compare with the Danish Royal Ballet? Have they anything in the arts that has attained the standard of their tennis players?

We learn from Table X.1 that government expenditure on the arts in Sweden devotes only 1.3% to the cinema, but 22.2% to the press subsidy; and according to Table X.4 the highest percentage of Swedish household expenditure on the arts (24%) goes on newspapers and magazines, just 4% more than expenditure on radios, TV sets and gramophones.

The serious-minded reader will turn from such curiosities to the solid fare offered by the papers, among the most interesting of which are Peter Nestler's reflections on financing the arts at the local level in Germany and Muriel Nissel's criticisms of the way we finance the arts in Britain.

Inevitably, in a work of this character, the economic aspects of art are given prominence. But arguments that the arts are "a provider of tourist services" and that "the arts industry is labour-intensive and can offer many jobs" may be self-defeating. If Yeats, Matisse, Stravinsky and their successors are merely up-market equivalents of restaurant managers, travel agents and bingo-hall proprietors, why should taxpayers subsidise them? Peter Nestler reaffirms true values when he says, "Money alone cannot engender art."

The British Council spends nothing on our literature and other arts within this country, and a miserably low proportion of its total budget (£173 million in 1983-84) on making them known throughout the world. Since it was founded in 1934 to

¹ *Funding the Arts in Europe*. Edited by JOHN MYERSCOUGH. Policy Studies Institute (1-2 Castle Lane, London SW1E 6DF), £4.50 (inc. postage).

promote cultural relations with other countries, this may astonish the uninitiated. Lady Donaldson's informative history of the Council² will enlighten their darkness and illuminate the nature of an organisation whose function and activities still remain a mystery to most people in this country. (It may, however, be slightly better known than in 1946 when, seeking permission from the Ministry of Labour to take up my post abroad, I found it hard to persuade the clerk that my employers were neither the British Council of Churches nor the Gas Council.)

FRANCES DONALDSON HAS WRITTEN biographies and studies of Frederick Lonsdale, P. G. Wodehouse, Evelyn Waugh, Edward VIII, and the Marconi scandal. Her earlier works have fitted her well for her latest undertaking: there are episodes in the Council's history that recall farcical scenes in her father's plays, the fatuous ditherings of Wodehouse's drones and moments of black comedy in Waugh. Even her researches into the financial manoeuvres of Lloyd George, Isaacs, and Samuel, so unlike the rigid probity of British Council finance, will have made her familiar with estimates, allocations, official enquiries, and government reports.

It was said of a German historian that he dug deeper and came up dirtier than any predecessor. Frances Donaldson, though going pretty deep, has remained white and spruce. She pays a generous and well-merited tribute to Dr Harriet Harvey-Wood, who did all the research for the book and, as one who has spent most of her working life in the British Council, has an encyclopaedic knowledge of its operations. Her father, Henry Harvey-Wood, was also a Council officer, who became Representative in France and in Italy. He helped to found the Edinburgh Festival, and during the War provided a post in the Council for Edwin Muir, thus rescuing him from poverty and obscurity.

The early chapters of the book are the liveliest, dealing as they do with the foundation of the Council and its survival during the War. Here are recorded the names and the actions of men in high places who were convinced that something must be done to counter the propaganda of the Germans and the Italians by making known to other countries the values of our civilisation. Among those names Frances Donaldson singles out Sir Percy Loraine, Sir Claude Russell, and two men who deserve to be called the founding fathers of the British Council: Sir Reginald Leeper and Lord Lloyd. The story of how they contrived to establish the Council and to fight for its survival is in the best tradition of intrigue and chance. There was an unofficial Cultural Relations Committee; a Students Committee; an Ibero-American Committee; an All People's Association; and a Committee of International Understanding and Co-operation. Leeper got rid of Sir Evelyn Wrench, who was the Chairman of the two latter bodies, and somehow the British Council came into being. As Frances Donaldson admits, the story is by no means clear: at times it reads like a cross between a history of Asquith's War Cabinet and a scenario for the film *Carry On, Culture*.

² *The British Council: The First Fifty Years*. By FRANCES DONALDSON. Jonathan Cape, £16.50.

Lloyd's contribution came after he was appointed Chairman of the Council in 1937, in succession to Lord Tyrrell and Lord Eustace Percy. He was a man of abnormal energy and determination who was resolved that the Council should prosper. Since he was highly combative, and had a wide experience of war in the Middle East and of high office in Egypt and in India, he was fully equipped for the struggle against any foes he might descry. In 1939 he demanded and received from Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, the restoration of a proposed 20% cut in the Council's estimates. In 1941 the Minister of Information and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, exhausted by their dealings with Lloyd, abandoned their struggle with him over organisation and finance. A few months before his death in February 1941 he had wrested a prize that the Council's enemies had struggled to withhold: the grant of a Royal Charter.

THE COUNCIL'S WARTIME ACTIVITIES in the Middle East and in Latin America provide Frances Donaldson with instructive and amusing material. Flux Dundas, as Middle East Representative, was responsible for Council work in Aden, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, and Turkey. Dundas, who was proud (some thought inordinately so) of his descent from Pitt's friend Dundas, conducted himself with an upper-class assurance that was scarcely greater than his abilities. Life became even more complicated for him when the German advance drove the Council out of Greece and the Balkans. Dundas reported charges that some of the staff had brought with them an unsavoury reputation for maladministration, public immorality, financial muddling, disloyalty to the Council, internecine quarreling, and conduct that had caused them to be called "long-haired", "pansies", and "soft." Dundas was quick to point out that some of these accusations emanated from British expatriates who were prejudiced against the Council; but he refused to accept staff *en bloc* from other areas. Many years later a writer of fiction gave us a portrayal of Council life that puts flesh on the skeleton of Dundas's reports and is more complex and subtle than anything to be dredged from Council files. Olivia Manning was not a Council officer but she was married to R. D. Smith, who was. Her Balkan and Middle East trilogies, which are a memorial to her powers of observation, her amazing memory, and her skill as a novelist, recreate the atmosphere of the days when Council staff, expelled from the Balkans and from Greece, found safety in Egypt and, with the cosmopolitan crowds of refugees, awaited the outcome of the war in the Western Desert.

Far away, in Latin America, two highly unusual men served the British Council with egotistical panache. Sir Eugen Millington-Drake, formerly Minister at the British Embassy in Montevideo, became Chief Representative in Spanish American countries early in 1942, having been deftly off-loaded by the Foreign Office. Flamboyant and faintly absurd, he nevertheless, to quote Frances Donaldson, "created for the British Council a provincial empire that ran from the Atlantic coast to the Andes." It is hard not to admire a man

who gave £30,000 for Council use in Latin America, brought over a football coach who helped the Uruguayans beat the Argentines, and had a secretary run the whole length of the main platform of the station at Buenos Aires while he wrote a telegram on toilet paper.

Francis Toye, author of what is still the standard life of Verdi, had tried his hand at other ventures before becoming Council Representative in Brazil. After managing the London restaurant Boulestin for seven years, he became Director of the British Institute at Florence, leaving only on the eve of Italy's entry into the War. In Brazil he became famous for his often-repeated lecture in both English and Portuguese called "The Old School Tie." Regarded by the British as egotistical, conceited and presumptuous, he remains the most distinguished and the best remembered Council Representative in South America. Although his solidest achievement may have been the wartime expansion of the Cultural Institute in Rio, he set the greatest store by his work with his little Choral Society, whose repertory ranged from *Messiah* to *Mikado*.

After the War the question arose: is the British Council going to survive as an independent body? Indeed, that question has overshadowed the Council's work for the past forty years. Lady Donaldson notes the inordinate amount of time and energy spent by the Council's senior officers in fighting for its survival and for adequate funds. She writes of one period in the early 1950s when, for eighteen months, Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of State, and leading Civil Servants wrangled about the budget of the Information Services: it amounted to less than the cost of two bombers.

Between 1945 and 1983 the Council was the subject of a dozen major Reports (and a few lesser investigations) that float by in Frances Donaldson's pages like dead ships on Judgment Day. It would be tedious to précis her lucid summaries or to comment on the way in which one Report would contradict the recommendations of another put forward a few years earlier. The authors of these documents frequently advance what they regard as bracing reforms, which somehow entail amputation, castration, or strangulation. As Frances Donaldson observes in another context, she has never met anyone who did not approve of the activities he was proposing to cut.

ANY IMPARTIAL READER of her narrative will conclude that from the start the Treasury's attitude to the Council has been almost unremittingly hostile. Indeed, when as far back as 1920 the Tilley Report drew up a blueprint for the Council, the Treasury rejected it. Curzon referred the matter to the Cabinet, hoping that it would take a more generous attitude. It did not. In 1938 Edward Hale of the Treasury described the Council as "this horribly vigorous sapling"; and in September 1939 opposed the grant of a Royal Charter to the Council because that would help it to survive after the War. When in 1946 Alan Barlow of the Treasury submitted a Report that envisaged the abolition of the Council, the very existence of the Report was concealed from the Council. The pattern established in those early days recurred

over and over again during the next 40 to 50 years.

Nor were senior Ministers enthusiastic about the Council. Duff Cooper in 1941 proposed that the Minister of Information should be *ex officio* Chairman of the Council; Churchill believed at this time that its usefulness had ended with the death of Lord Lloyd. Three years later, in November 1944, he wrote that the Council was "one of the objects ripe for retrenchment after the war."

Labour politicians were no more benevolent. While Ernest Bevin may be described as an unfriendly neutral, Herbert Morrison was blatantly hostile. It is firmly believed in the British Council that before Bevin's death its estimates for the coming year had been printed, and that Morrison diverted funds earmarked for the Council's budget to the Central Office of Information, where some of his political cronies were ensconced.

The one major politician who consistently championed the British Council was Anthony Eden. He defended it against Churchill in 1941 and in 1953 fought for the acceptance of the Drogheda Report, which established the Council as a more or less permanent institution in our national life. But for him, thinks Frances Donaldson, the Council would have perished. If ever it needs a patron saint it could do worse than adopt Saint Anthony.

The most despicable of the Council's enemies was Lord Beaverbrook, whom Lady Donaldson justly calls "one of the few deliberately wicked men in British history." Adopting the terms that may have been applicable to a few officers in Greece and the Balkans during the War, the Beaverbrook press malevolently smeared the entire British Council staff with the stigma of effeminacy, and falsely represented the Council as wasting enormous sums on madrigal-singing and morris-dancing.

ONE RESULT of governmental parsimony and Treasury obstructiveness has been that the Council's career structure and conditions of service have made slow and painful progress from the disgracefully bad to the moderately good. Sir Malcolm Robertson, Sir Paul Sinker, and Sir John Henniker, whose terms of office spanned the years 1941 to 1972, did what they could to improve matters; but after nearly forty

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years of constant struggle the verdict of the Seebohm Report (1981) is unequivocal:

"The Council offers an interesting and varied career but not, by Civil Service or Diplomatic Service standards, a financially rewarding one. Prospects for home serving staff are particularly poor, as are those for locally-engaged (LE) staff overseas."

Since Lady Donaldson gives no precise examples of the discriminations against Council staff it may be of interest to glance at the long struggle over pensions. Sir Malcolm Robertson, who had called the salaries derisory, regarded the pension scheme as unfit for public scrutiny. Ten years later the scheme was still contributory and the pension was based on the amount contributed, an arrangement that would have proved disastrous in the inflationary years ahead. The Staff Association argued that since the Council's salary scales were based on those of the Civil Service, and since Council staff were subject in every respect to Civil Service regulations, it was only equitable that they should, like Civil Servants, receive non-contributory pensions based on final salary and length of service. This was eventually conceded in principle; but, lamented the Treasury, Council staff were not Civil Servants and it would need an Act of Parliament to make them eligible for non-contributory pensions. The time, alas, was not ripe for an approach to the government. Only when the Staff Association threatened to seek arbitration did the Treasury miraculously discover a clause in some Act whereby Council staff could receive the pensions they sought.

LADY DONALDSON WRITES justly and well about Sir Paul Sinker, Director-General from 1954-68. It was under him that the Council grew in numbers, financial resources, and power: he shifted the emphasis of the Council's work from the older centres of Western civilisation to the Third World, from traditional ideas of cultural work to education and aid. Although he was a former classics don at Jesus College, Cambridge, and a cultivated man in his private life, in his official life he was, as Blake might have said, hired to depress literature, music, drama, and the fine arts. He chose to recruit administrators, teachers, and those with scientific or technical qualifications. Lady Donaldson gives a selective list of writers who have worked for the Council; John Betjeman, P. M. Hubbard, Francis King, Edwin Muir, and Bernard Spencer. One might add the names of Ronald Bottrall, Lawrence Durrell, Alethea Hayter, Patrick Leigh-Fermor, Louis MacNeice, Steven Runciman, Frederick Tomlin, and Derek Traversi. These writers have at least one thing in common: they were all recruited before 1950. Then recruitment almost halted; and after 1954, when it was resumed, the policies of Sinker and his successors ensured that the Council and young men and women who cared about literature were seldom attracted to one another.

Yet it would be churlish not to acknowledge that Sir Paul was almost certainly the greatest Director-General in the

Council's history. He was also a less grim figure than the one who emerges from Lady Donaldson's account. He had a nice sense of sardonic humour and would, it is said, instruct one of his Controllers to draft an extensive memorandum: "No need to hurry. Just let me have it by 12 noon tomorrow." He liked to tell a story of his Cambridge days. Picking up his telephone to answer a call, Paul Sinker said, "Tutor of Jesus here", and received the reply, uttered in an American accent, "I congratulate you, sir, on your distinguished pupil."

Lady Donaldson has her reservations about the Council's ambitious and successful development of English Language teaching, planned and put through by Arthur King. While she acknowledges that it was an inevitable consequence of Sinker's revolutionary policies, she laments the divorce of language from literature and the decay of British Institutes, which she rightly sees as incomparable organisations for studying the culture of our country. She may not be fully aware of the hostility to literature displayed by some of Arthur King's less cultivated acolytes. One highly intelligent English Language Officer was asked by a group of European professional men and women whom he was teaching if they might read a play with him. Feeling that this might be too subversive an activity to pursue in Council time, he agreed that they should follow it out of office hours. London HQ ruled that his scheme was inappropriate.

Lady Donaldson writes cogently, though briefly, about Lilian Somerville, whose work in building up the Council's permanent collection of paintings and sculpture and in helping Henry Moore and other artists to achieve international recognition constitutes her abiding legacy. She seems to me less perceptive about Nancy Parkinson, even though she describes her as one of the great names in Council history. We are told that she was a compulsive worker who was regarded by her staff as autocratic and bossy, but not that she was a woman who commanded and gave unstinted affection and loyalty. The highest honour that a Council officer can expect is a CBE; no officer has received a knighthood, except an imported Director-General who has not brought one along with him. Nancy Parkinson, who was not even one of the three highest-grade officers in the Council, was appointed DCMG, the first person in any organisation ever to receive that honour—but we learn this in a footnote, as though such honours came round with the rations. When Paul Sinker, who had his brushes with Dame Nancy, gave the address at her memorial service in the crypt of St Paul's, he was paying the tribute of one great public servant to another.

It is a pity that Lady Donaldson did not investigate the history of the relationship over the years between the Council and British Missions overseas. It would have been instructive had she examined the Council's long struggle to get Treasury permission to buy premises instead of making do with rented buildings that were often unsuitable and occasionally squalid. But she has covered a lot of ground, from the defection of two Council officers behind the Iron Curtain in the late 1940s, to George Rylands's magnificent recordings of Shakespeare, the revival of British Institutes in the late 1970s, and the creation of a superb British Cultural Centre in Paris in the early 1970s—a monument to Sir Christopher Soames's bull-like determination to get money for a building that would house in

fitting style the British Council and the British Institute.³

As Lady Donaldson observes, no Council officer has ever become Director-General. This may have been justifiable in the early days when the Council needed a powerful figure from outside to save it from predators; and although Kenneth Johnstone would have been a good DG, an appointment from within the Council would, on at least one occasion, have proved more than regrettable. Now, according to those well placed to judge, there is a member of staff who is *papabile*. Let us hope that the Board will break with the past when the present admirable DG retires, and appoint a serving officer to lead the Council into the new century, thus opening a fresh

³ This institute is governed by the Universities of London and of Paris. It is independent of the British Council.

epoch in the history of the organisation whose first fifty years have been chronicled by Lady Donaldson with such diligence and skill.

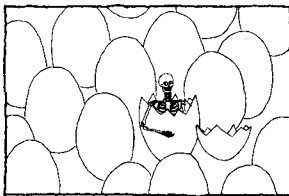
The Epilogue to Lady Donaldson's book, an account of journeys to various Council offices abroad, confirms not only her acuteness of observation but also her robust good sense, humanity, and imaginative sympathy—qualities that have not always been predominant on the upper floors of Davies Street and Spring Gardens. Perhaps she could be appointed Inspector-General to the British Council, given no specific tasks but charged with keeping a watchful eye on peddlers of panaceas such as M bi O (Management by Objectives), eliminating jargon, hacking at the undergrowth of acronyms, and strangling anybody who wants to replace libraries with information retrieval centres.

Anno Dominicism

On Ages & Ageing—By JOHN SILVERLIGHT

"... A letter from a lady who has described me in a French newspaper—'a noble lady with a shock of white hair'—Lord, are we as old as all that? I feel about six and a half."

Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell (1937)



VIRGINIA WOOLF was fifty-five when she wrote that letter, just past mid-way in the range of ages surveyed in this anthology, nought to a hundred, and her comment perfectly conveys the jolt almost universally felt on colliding with the realisation that one is grown up, is, indeed, growing old.

But how old is "old"? To me as a thirteen-year-old school-boy newly arrived in this country from a day school in America, even boys of fifteen and sixteen were old. As a nineteen-year-old subaltern, I thought my battery commander—aged thirty-five?—was old. When I arrived in Fleet Street at thirty the Managing Editor of my paper—forty? forty-two?—was old. It's all very subjective and relative. As Bernard Baruch said at eighty-five, "To me, old age is always fifteen years older than I am."

The forties, however, seem generally accepted as something of a watershed. Someone has said that to get anywhere in politics you need to be at least an MP by forty. A famous man I know was so appalled on the eve of his fortieth birthday, old age as he saw it, that he vomited all night long. Entries in *The Oxford Book of Ages*¹ under the heading "40" include:

¹ *The Oxford Book of Ages*. Chosen by ANTHONY and SALLY SAMPSON. Oxford University Press, £8.95.

"Forty is the old age of youth; fifty is the youth of old age."

VICTOR HUGO

"No one becomes forty without incredulity and a sense of outrage."

CLIFFORD BAX

*Nobody feels well after his fortieth birthday
But the convalescence is touched by glory.*

PETER PORTER

"She told him that the next day would be her own fortieth birthday. He replied, 'If you were hit by a car today the papers would say that a young woman was run over. If it happens tomorrow, they'll make it: "A forty-ish woman".'"

ALBERT CAMUS, in *A Biography*, by Herbert Lottman

Cicero wrote in *De Senectute*, when he was sixty-two: "Old age begins at forty-six years, according to the common opinion." No wonder Mrs Thatcher said in 1979 (the year she became Prime Minister at fifty-three): "I'd like to go on being thirty-five for a long time."

It is easier to pinpoint the onset of physical ageing. When I complained of aches and pains some years ago to my GP, adding, "I suppose I'm getting on", he said that everyone's joints start to decay at twenty-five. In his Melchett Lecture "Old Age" (1972) Lord Rothschild said:

"Brain weight peaks at about twenty-five, and the number of critical cells, after a period of constancy from birth to the early twenties, declines sharply to the nineties. Every day of our adult lives more than 100,000 nerve cells die and are never, of course, replaced."

Against that, Sir Vivian Fuchs said in his Presidential Address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in the same year, that while twenty to twenty-five is the time for adventure, and while the young man

"has physical fitness, strength and zest . . . unfortunately they are often offset by impatience, excessive short-term expenditure of energy, and the inability to sustain enthusiasm in the face of frustrating circumstances. . . . The optimum age in expedition work is between thirty and thirty-five years. . . . At that age a man is still physically fit, and he has learnt from experience what he can and cannot do. In addition he has probably acquired the necessary techniques and, hopefully, the all-important stability. Beyond thirty-five there is a risk that he may not be physically sound and may well have taken to the fleshpots. He may also have adopted rigid attitudes regarding what he thinks he can do, what he intends to do, how much effort he will expend, and what he considers to be his rights and comforts. . . . I hasten to add that there are, of course, many exceptions. . . ."

Sir Vivian commented later:

"I have to admit that my first of thirteen birthdays spent in the Antarctic was my fortieth. My fiftieth was celebrated shortly after passing through the South Pole. I have often been amused by catching myself referring to someone as 'that old man' only to find that he was ten or fifteen years younger than I am!"

So, physically at least, to grow old is to decline. Is that why people often conceal their age? Some examples:

"Against a setting of dust-coloured brocade, and opposite my brother, sat [Wyndham] Lewis. . . . At the end of dinner, in the quietness, he first made a calculation with a pencil on an old matchbox and then, with the usual yellowing cigarette stub clamped to his upper lip while he spoke . . . said firmly, but in a carefully lowered voice: 'Remember! I'm thirty-seven till I pass the word around!'"

SIR OSBERT SITWELL, *Laughter in the Next Room*

"The *Sunday Express* today published an extraordinary story to the effect that I am really forty-one instead of thirty-nine, and hinted that I had faked my age in the reference books. The awful thing is that it is true. Now I feel apprehensive and shy, as one does when one is in disgrace. Honor is being very sweet and loyal about it . . . I told her she would be a widow two years earlier."

CHIPS CHANNON, *Diaries*

"Her age shall be no secret to the reader, though to her most intimate friends, even to Mr Browne, it had never been divulged. She was forty-three, but carried her years so well, and had received such gifts from nature, that it was impossible to deny that she was a beautiful woman . . . she did not commit herself; but smiled and whispered, and made confidences, and looked out of her own eyes into men's eyes as though there might be some mysterious



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bond between her and them—if only mysterious circumstances would permit it.”

ANTHONY TROLLOPE, *The Way We Live Now*

“I refuse to admit that I’m more than fifty-two even if that does make my sons illegitimate.”

LADY ASTOR

Explanatory notes in the book are mostly good—sparse and informative. However, Nancy Astor (presumably the Lady Astor quoted here) had four sons, all well known: William, the third viscount, who died in 1966; David; Michael, who died in 1980; and Jacob. The date of her remark would have been interesting. Again, Cicero is quoted as saying at sixty-two, “No one is so old he does not think he could live another year”, with a note adding: “He lived another year.” I think the fact that he was put to death in the aftermath of Julius Caesar’s assassination is also relevant.

ON MORALS, there is the comforting thought from Charles Wesley in the “64” section, “How foolish was my hope and vain/That age would conquer sin”—comforting because if someone as saintly as Charles Wesley felt thus, there is hope for lesser mortals. The three Theological and four Cardinal Virtues go unmentioned, as do most of the Seven Deadly Sins. The two that appear, Gluttony (which I take to include indulgence in alcohol) and Lust, are, I think, the least deadly of the seven—perhaps instead of sins they could be termed Experiences, if not Pleasures. At thirty-eight Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra: “Bye the bye, as I must leave off being young, I find many Douceurs in being a sort of Chaperon for I am put on the Sofa near the fire & can drink as much wine as I like”, which I find wholly endearing. Palmerston at eighty, according to *Disraeli’s Reminiscences*.

“ate for dinner two plates of turtle soup; he was then served very amply to a plate of cod and oyster sauce; he then took a pate; afterwards he was helped to two very greasy-looking entrees; he then despatched a plate of roast mutton; there then appeared before him the largest, and to my mind the hardest slice of ham that ever figured on the table of a nobleman, yet it disappeared, just in time for him to answer the inquiry of his butler: ‘Snipe, my Lord, or pheasant?’ He instantly replied pheasant, thus completing his ninth dish of meat at that meal.”

On sexual yearnings in old age, Helen Selena, Lady Dufferin, is quoted in a letter to Abraham Howard in February

1858, recalling the poet Samuel Rogers: “The only ‘funny’ thing I remember his saying, was, on one occasion when we were accidentally left in the dark, after some jesting remark on the danger to my reputation—‘Ah, my dear, if sweet seventy-eight could come again! *Mais ces beaux jours sont passés.*’” Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., after seeing a pretty girl, said at ninety-two: “What wouldn’t I give to be seventy again!” At eighty-two E. M. Forster wrote to Joe Ackersley: “I am rather prone to senile lechery just now—want to touch the right person in the right place, in order to shake off bodily loneliness.”

I am reminded of other examples. Four months short of her seventieth birthday, Ivy Litvinov, according to her biographer, John Carswell,² “made a note . . . from which it is clear that she was having an affair with a woman younger than herself. ‘Fantastic day ended. Wild, sweet love. My only desire—that any moment of it should go on for ever. Any—doesn’t matter which. With her not so simple.’” Mistinguett, so the story goes, when asked at eighty when one should give up making love, replied, “Is there such an age?” Pétain, at ninety, is reported to have lamented, “If only I could make love more often. Once a day would do.”

Yeats at seventy-one was bitter and angry:

*You think it horrible that lust and rage
Should dance attendance upon my old age;
They were not such a plague when I was young;
What else have I to spur me into song?*

Even more poignant is his “Politics” from about the same time:

*How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics?
Yet here’s a travelled man that knows
What he talks about,
And there’s a politician
That has read and thought,
And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war’s alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms!*

Such hankerings, apparently, did not afflict Thackeray: “When one is twenty, yes”, he wrote to Dr John Brown in November 1887, “but at forty-seven Venus may rise from the sea, and I for one should hardly put on my spectacles to have a look.”

The Oxford Book of Ages told me something about myself. It provides insights into the characters of people I am interested in. I have enjoyed few anthologies more.

² John Carswell, *The Exile: Ivy Litvinov* (1983).

Books Encountered

The Originals: Who's Really Who in Fiction. By WILLIAM AMOS. Jonathan Cape, £12.95.

"Really" begs the key question: but the entries are more cautious, sometimes repudiating false identifications. Proust, Wells, Waugh, Snow, and Anthony Powell are among the countless authors; but what's become of Widmerpool?

The Falklands War: Lessons for Strategy, Diplomacy and International Law. Edited by ALBERTO R. COLL and ANTHONY C. AREND. Allen & Unwin, £18, paper £7.95.

For once, a useful symposium. Give or take an incomplete account of the fighting and of historical sources, this is a cool and scholarly appraisal, notably of the defects and ambiguities in international law, based on a 1982 conference.

Mitford's Japan: The Memoirs and Recollections, 1866-1906, of Algernon Bertram Mitford, the first Lord Redesdale. Edited by HUGH CORTAZZI. Athlone Press, £18.

Collected by the former British Ambassador to Japan from Mitford's published *Memoirs*, Foreign Office reports, and private letters to his father, plus *Punch*-style black-and-white illustrations: far more stately than his granddaughters, but just as vivid, notably on a *hara-kiri*. "It was horrible." Quite.

Maud: The Diaries of Maud Berkeley. Adapted by FLORA FRASER. Introduced by ELIZABETH LONGFORD. Secker & Warburg, £12.95.

Very un-Naughty Eighties on the Isle of Wight. A spritely girl's diary of domestic fun and mishaps in a demure, prosperous Victorian household, enlivened by slightly sub-*Punch* comic drawings of Carroll-like charm and (now) pathos.

Powers and Liberties: The Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West. By JOHN A. HALL. Basil Blackwell, £19.50.

A bold Ruskinian conspectus, leaning also on Weber and Aron, of world civilisations, culminating in curious options for Europe: to do nothing and accept Pax Americana, or to unite in a European defence system and open its markets to the Third World. The author lectures in sociology, not economics.

Explorers Extraordinary. By JOHN KEAY. John Murray/BBC, £10.95.

More tales of travellers, alas unindexed, to accompany the author's Radio-4 series. Best known is Mary Kingsley: most surprising, John Dundas Cochrane, Louis de Rougemont, and Henry Savage Landor, grandson of the poet. Is the opposite of a short story a tall one?

The Promise of History: Essays in Political Philosophy. Edited by ATHANASIOS MOULAKIS. Walter de Gruyter, DM 77.

An eccentric symposium from the European University Institute in Florence, edited by the Head of its Political and Social Sciences Department. Interesting essays on Croce, Niebuhr, and Futurism; but they don't unite the book, still less Europe.

A Taste for Travel: An Anthology. By JOHN JULIUS NORWICH. Macmillan, £14.95.

The "by" correctly balances the word "anthology": Lord Norwich's linking passages are as entertaining as his copious extracts from Baedeker, Belloc, Conrad, Curzon, Doughty, Durrell, and so on down the alphabet to Warburton, Waugh, and Gavin Young. A cabin trunk for the winter armchair.

The Noonday Sun: Edwardians in the Tropics. By VALERIE PAKENHAM. Methuen, £12.50.

Illustrated verandah-table book based on letters, diaries, and albums, many of them unpublished, some from John Julius's cast. It ends with the film of *Sanders of the River*, in which Jomo Ken-

yatta was an extra: but it spells Sandi "Sandy." Did Bones read the proofs?

Miss Fane in India. By JOHN PEMBLE. Alan Sutton, £10.95.

Disdainful tales from the Raj, in letters and a journal by the only daughter of the General appointed Commander-in-Chief in 1835. She acted as his hostess for three years, and died a spinster in Pau in 1886. A sharp eye and pen, but little empathy. Typical joke: the Rajah of Bhurtpore's pendulous bosom.

Kipling's India: Uncollected Sketches 1884-88. Edited by THOMAS PINNEY. Macmillan, £25.

Fifty-six previously unidentified newspaper pieces written by Kipling aged 19 to 23, unearthed from cuttings books. Professor Pinney offers a glossary and index, plus occasional cross-references to *Kim*, etc. The first-hand reporting speaks for itself.

The Ladies of Castlebrae: A Story of Nineteenth-Century Travel and Research. By A. WHIGHAM PRICE. Alan Sutton, £10.95.

Artless but astonishing account of resolute, erudite, blue-stockinged twin sisters who travelled from Ayrshire to Sinai and discovered a very early Syriac version of the Gospels, pausing only to write novels and acquire degrees. "Castlebrae" was their Cambridge house. *They* would have added an index.

Why the Crimean War? A Cautionary Tale. By NORMAN RICH. University Press of New England, £20.

Impeccable account of the Crimean War, disastrously fought to "contain" Russia. Peccable conclusion by Professor Rich: that it has lessons for today. Doesn't everyone support what he calls "the politics of grouping"—convincing the superpowers that survival demands cooperation? The problem remains: how?

Henry Brougham 1778-1868: His Public Career. By ROBERT STEWART. Bodley Head, £18.

Crisp and thorough political biography of the co-founder of the *Edinburgh Review* and new broom of the Whigs. He missed the highest office—perhaps through being, as Bagehot called him, a "Jonah of detail", and too dashing for the dull.

Open Window—Open Door. By RICHARD STOKER. Regency Press, £10.50.

Idiosyncratic reminiscences by the Yorkshire-born composer and poet, pupil of Nadia Boulanger, and creator of the opera *Johnson Preserv'd*. With family photographs and musicography, they have the furious, revealing self-absorption of a dedicated artist.

The Randlords: The Men who Made South Africa. By GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

Rotten title for a teeming, glittering book. How about *Mines, all Mines*? The author genially disclaims scholarly ambition, but has dug deep and wide to reveal the cruelties, excitements, triumphs, and ironies of a tale still awaiting its dénouement.

First with the News: The History of W. H. Smith 1792-1972. By CHARLES WILSON. Jonathan Cape, £12.95.

An odd endeavour, the history of a newsagent. But the Emeritus Professor of Modern History at Cambridge makes it enthralling—embracing not just the family business, but advertising, railways, newspapers, labour unions, *The Times*, and even censorship.

Mme de Staël. By RENEE WINEGARTEN. Berg, £8.95, paper £3.95.

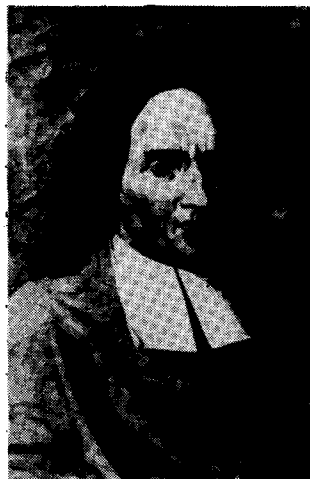
Although in a "Women's Series" and with a peroration about "the never-ending battle to increase human potential and to procure and preserve the essential liberties", this is no tract, but a brief and brisk account of a stout spirit and fine, shrewd, persecuted writer.

R. M.

IDEOLOGY

Marx & Vico

By Kenneth Minogue



THE MARXIST intellectual industry is so huge these days that to encounter a book called, starkly, *Vico and Marx*¹ conveys the impression of a gnat landing on the back of an elephant. I take this image from what seems to have been the first joke in recorded history, found (if I remember rightly) on a shard dug up near the ruins of Babylon. The gnat warns the elephant to brace itself, because he is about to fly away. "Don't trouble yourself", replies the elephant, "I didn't

notice you landing, and I won't notice you departing. . . ."

Marx's own awareness of Vico's thought was similarly gnat-like in scale and rests upon a handful of references. There is no real question of influence. At best, as Terence Ball remarks in a brilliant essay, Marx was "impressed by Vico's originality and erudition and half-amused by his more bizarre flights of philological fancy."² Marx in fact exhibits no serious interest in Vico whatever; but one may guess that he would hardly fail to have recognised in Vico someone in the same line of business as himself. Many years before he even came across Vico, Marx had written a famous sentence which sums up as well as any the core of his own aspirations: "Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution." Vico it was who invented the specific version of the riddle of history to which both responded.

By the time Marx took up the issue, a certain simplification had set in. The theoretical problem of discovering a divine pattern in the history of humanity had picked up along the way the practical question of how mankind could be released from toil and division; and communism was the all-purpose solution to the whole package. Vico's treatment of the riddle

of history was both less ambitious and more complex.

The speculative problem of history is whether the infinite variety of its events makes any coherent sense. Vico was familiar with the classical opinions on this subject. He was specifically concerned to refute both the Epicurean view that, since everything is "chance", we might as well make the best of it; and also the Stoic view that everything results from the unfolding of "necessity", to which we had better accommodate ourselves. He had a running battle with Polybius about the importance of religion in constituting civilisation (for Polybius had remarked that religion would be unnecessary if all men were philosophers), but he agreed in detecting a cyclical pattern in human events.

Vico's basic orientation, of course, was Christian, and every Christian has, in a sense, been supplied with a key to the riddle of history along with his Creed. It is to be found in the revelation of divine purpose in the course of the sacred history of the Jews. The Christian revelation had thus released mankind from the grim destiny of merely rattling helplessly around the closed system of the ancients. Its key idea was that of providence, and in Vico's day, providence was on the move. Theologians were playing with the idea that God's intervention in the world could be discovered not only in the events of sacred history, but also in the laws and regularities of human nature by which a collection of evident sinners had, in spite of their fallen condition, managed to build civilisations upon the earth.

The genius of Vico lay in the fact that he was the first to realise in full measure the possibilities of this idea. In the curious intellectual circumstances of late 17th-century Naples, the undisturbed cultivation of this idea required that he should put to one side the history of the Jews, who had been under direct divine guidance. The materials for this new discovery of the ways of providence were to be found in the histories of the Gentiles, especially the history of the Greeks and Romans with which he was most familiar. And in the development of his central idea, he was given confidence by a doctrine of method (to which he gave a new twist) inherited most directly from the Scholastics of the late Middle Ages.

This was the idea that we can only fully understand the things that we make ourselves: *verum et factum convertuntur*. The usual illustration was that man could understand and develop the science of geometry because it concerns shapes which he makes himself; and the important contrast was with the investigation of nature, for nature had been made by God, and all that man could do was study it from the outside, by the experimental method.

Vico's *New Science . . . concerning the Common Nature of the Nations* (1725, 1730, 1744) depends upon this method, and some of the excitement it generated for Vico comes out in one of the most famous sentences he ever wrote:

"But in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never failing light of a truth beyond all question: that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind."³

¹ *Vico and Marx: Affinities and Contrasts*. Edited by GIORGIO TAGLIACOZZO. Macmillan Press (1938), £30.00.

² Terence Ball, "On 'Making' History in Vico and Marx", *Vico and Marx*, p. 79.

³ *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Bergin and Fisch (Cornell University Press, 1948), para. 331.

It is this idea in Vico which took Marx's fancy, and led him carelessly to enrol Vico as one of his own predecessors, for with a little pushing and shoving it could be identified with Marx's own famous formula that:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please. . . . The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."⁴

This famous formula bears a superficial resemblance to the Vichian doctrine of *verum et factum*; but the divergences are much more striking than the similarities.

Vico's account of history is the tale of how proto-human beasts created humanity by their development of the possibilities of symbolic understanding. In this account, language and ideas are absolutely fundamental. By contrast with Vico's emphasis on the imagination, Marx presents man as an animal whose mind merely reflects the world; man is equipped with a "consciousness" which has throughout history generally been distorted through concepts generated by a class-divided society. Doomed to a necessary subservience to exploitative modes of production, man himself does not develop; indeed, the "final leap" to full humanity will significantly be made by the most vacuous and least developed creatures to be found in the last stage of the process: a "proletariat." History had been a nightmare because man could not escape the phantoms of his own brain; and capitalism, while an advance on earlier epochs in the sense that its development of productive capacities is bringing the final release nearer, is actually more debased and mystificatory than earlier epochs.

Hence the formula "*Man makes his own history*" is a curious one, because it suggests that men deliberately fabricate their destiny—something which Marx argues will only happen after the Revolution, and which will, in happening, abolish history. The rather exiguous actual meaning of the formula is that man as a producing animal produces what is needed to satisfy himself, and that it is this process which determines what we call "history." But the actual significance of the formula, we may guess, lies in getting God out of the historical act, and thus removing the providential aspect which Vico saw as the solution to the riddle of history.

That providential aspect was central to Vico's purpose, because from one point of view the *New Science* is an exercise in 18th-century optimism. That it was so much more was a triumph of genius over unpropitious circumstances. A Professor of Rhetoric at Naples, disappointed in his hopes of career advancement, Vico was constricted by an alert and censorious Roman Catholic orthodoxy, a European culture so dominated by mathematical ideas as to be contemptuous of history, and a Biblical time-scale which set the Creation no further back than 4004 BC. Such a time-scale made evident difficulties for those who wished to understand the past. When in the late 17th century a London apothecary found a

stone axe and some ancient bones in Gray's Inn Lane, the bones were thought to be those of a Roman elephant, because the sheer antiquity of the creature ran up against Biblical certainties.⁵ For Vico, the Universal Flood was the starting point, and he allowed a few hundred years for the descendants of Ham and Japheth to descend to the bestiality from which they might start their ascent to civilisation.

VICO'S ACCOUNT of the origin of civilisation is so brilliantly colourful that it helps to account for the fact that someone who was forgotten after his death for several generations, and whose major discoveries were made again by later thinkers, could blossom into an academic cult figure.

His problem was similar to that of the Scottish conjectural historians: how to account for the beginnings of civilisation without invoking an original designer, either in the form of a semi-divine lawgiver, or in the form of the civilised intelligence presupposed by the theorists of the Social Contract. The general solution to this problem had to be some human response to a commonplace circumstance, which might create social institutions without any prevision of what they would become. Vico imagines a set of bestial giants wandering the uplands and engaging in an "infamous promiscuity of things and of women." Like God, man created civilisation out of a chaos, but it was a chaos of seed. These early creatures were torn between "the powerful restraints of frightful superstition and the goading stimuli of bestial lust." On hearing the first thunderclaps after the Flood, they forcibly seized their women ("who were naturally shy and unruly") and dragged them into their caves to become lifelong companions. Thunder was thus, as it were, the first meaningful utterance in secular history; and out of it men made the first idea of God and began to learn the practice of moral restraint on which civilisation depends. Such was the origin of Jove; and Vico believed that all the nations had gone through some version of this process.

WHETHER ONE SEEKS TO SOLVE the riddle of history must himself become the spinner of a tale, though it will have to be a tale of abstract characters. It will thus be both story and theory, and most exponents of the art have had a weakness for triadic structures. Vico's version was indeed triadic, and derived from the tradition of the ancient Egyptians.

The first stage of civilisation is the age of the Gods, because primitive men believe themselves to be directly governed from above; the next is that of the Heroes, who gather round themselves a set of clients and dependents seeking asylum from the rigours of the state of nature; and then emerge the Monarchies and popular Commonwealths of history.

What is important about this sequence is that it explains the emergence of humanity itself, for we begin with beasts, and move in stages towards the fully self-conscious and civilised human beings of Vico's own day. Such was the cycle of an ideal, eternal history which Vico believed all the Gentile nations would traverse, and to some extent re-traverse—for,

⁴ "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 103.

⁵ Glyn Daniel, *The Idea of Prehistory* (1962), pp. 32-33.

after the Age of Men, Vico conceives of a falling into what he interestingly calls a “barbarism of reflection.” Then the process must recommence, though at a higher level than before.

Would this process go on forever? To this Vico had no direct answer, perhaps because (as R. G. Collingwood remarked in discussing Vico) “the historian never predicts.”⁶ But Vico’s view of the matter may be inferred if we recollect that he has a twin-track view of providence. One track is to be found in God’s direct involvement in the history of the Jews and the redemptive mission of Jesus; the other is to be found in the character and circumstances which had led the Gentiles to evolve civilisations in which a recognition of the divine, so far as it was possible for unaided reason, had emerged. Vico had discovered a providential plan in the seeds of civilisation implanted in human nature. But in the Christian civilisation of 18th-century Europe, these two tracks had converged, thus creating what could validly be regarded as world history. Vico could thus recognise the specialness of his own time without having to believe—as did Marx—that he had also understood the ultimate outcome of the process he had discovered.

IN ALL OF these respects, he is thus to be distinguished from Marx; and it must be said that, in spite of an enthusiastic tendency of some (especially Italian) writers to regard Vico as a major influence on Marx, the connections between them are close to negligible.

Marx’s recorded mentions of Vico are limited to three: two epistolary, and one a footnote in *Das Kapital*. As Arshi Pipa argues in an ingenious essay,⁷ the supposedly admiring references to Vico in Marx’s letter to Ferdinand Lassalle are actually an elliptical put-down of that flamboyant competitor with Marx for influence over the working classes. The letter (of 28 April 1862) contains a typical piece of Marxian boasting:

“... you seem not to have read Vico’s *New Science*. . . . Working through the original, which is written not only in Italian, but also in a queer Neapolitan dialect, would be of little help. My advice is that you read the French translation of the work. . . .”

The footnote in *Kapital* is little more than the kind of vaguely impressive reference with which intellectuals salt their work; and it gets Vico quite wrong. Marx is here pursuing his central theme of the primacy of society over the individual, and remarks that hardly any of the inventions of the 18th century are the work of a single individual. He then invokes Darwin’s history of what he calls “natural technology, i.e., the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which serve as the instruments of production for sustaining their life. . . .” By analogy, tools and machines are

the “productive organs of man in society.” Their history, Marx suggests, is no less important than the history of the organs of plants and animals, and would be easier “to compile.” It is in giving the reason why such a history would be easier that Marx chose to invoke Vico:

“since, as Vico says, human history differs from natural history in that we have made the former, but not the latter.”

Now what Marx actually thinks is that “Man” has made everything. He certainly does not accept that Man is cut off from Nature because it was made by God. On the contrary, Nature is for Marx man’s own “inorganic body”, and the estrangement of man from nature results not from man’s place in the creation, but from the condition of estranged labour in which man’s “inorganic body, nature, is taken away from him.”⁸ We must thus conclude that the encounter between Marx and Vico is very largely a failure in the meeting of minds.

Part of the reason for this is no doubt that, with Marx, *any* concern with other thinkers will necessarily be abortive, because, believing that he has for the first time discovered the truth about the human condition, Marx can do nothing else with his intellectual heritage except grade it in terms of how close it got to his saving revelation. Vico was, perhaps, a little less arrogant; but for him the central issue is, precisely, allowing a meeting of minds to take place. His real subject is the emergence of humanity from elementary, i.e. bestial, materials; and it is common participation in the human experience of understanding which unites both the student and what he studies. Vico can potentially understand the world of Homer, because Vico and Homer are alike human. It is true, indeed, that Vico thinks that everybody has so far misunderstood the Homeric world, but this is because they have so far lacked the interpretive key that humanity is a process of providential development. The simple Christian spirit will disapprove of the Homeric world because of the barbaric actions and beliefs described; and the philosopher is likely to stigmatise most of it as irrational. These responses condemn the Homeric world in terms of abstract universals, rather than recognising that the men of that heroic era were necessarily different from us and thought in terms of what Vico calls “imaginative universals.” The power which the myths and fables of that period still have derived, he argued, from the fact that they are both imaginative and universal.

Indeed, Vico’s emphasis on the *imaginative* is such that he takes civilisation to be the achievement of poets, not of philosophers. Vico here draws upon the ambiguity of the Greek *poiesis*, which means both making and poetry. Man creates himself, as it were, by successive leaps of imagination (*fantasia*) in which these evolving creatures respond to the exigencies of their immediate situation and endow the world with meaning. At first this process is anthropomorphic, for:

“the human mind, because of its indefinite nature, wherever it is lost in ignorance makes itself the rule of the universe in respect of everything it does not know.”

The New Science, para 180

The form of human self-creation is essentially linguistic. It is

⁶ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1946), p. 68.

⁷ Arshi Pipa, “Marx’s Relation to Vico: A Philological Approach”, *Vico and Marx*, p. 290.

⁸ “The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844”, Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 3, p. 227.

the things men do with words—and, above all, with the transference of understanding permitted by metaphor—which allows them to map the world in terms of the coordinates of their own experience. In the course of this process, all the nations develop the essential institutions out of which civilisations are made, and their very universality demonstrates the power of providence: religion, marriage, burial rites. Vico's account of human self-creation is especially resonant in the context of 20th-century preoccupation with language and communication, for as Terrence Ball writes (*Vico and Marx*, p. 89):

“... just as the Word of God created the world of nature, so do the words of man create the world of nations. The creators of this world are also godlike, inasmuch as they create it *ex nihilo* and by the word. We live, after all, in a world of words: These are the ‘materials’ from which society is ‘made’.”

Just as we must learn their language in order to understand what the men of other nations are saying, so we must also understand their cultural “language” if we are not to dismiss their judgments as irrational merely because they are remote and unfamiliar. Vico's *New Science* in these terms elucidates the language of culture, and once we speak it, we have the power to understand anything human. It is a key which opens both historical and anthropological doors, for it allows us to grasp not only the thought of vanished times, but also that of contemporary peoples whose way of life sounds strange to us. For these people too are caught up in the providential unity of human nature, and may thus be located in terms of one or other of the cyclical stages.

Hence, just as Vico had both posed and solved an important new version of the riddle of history, so he had also discovered, and in that very process dissolved, a certain type of barrier to mutual human understanding; for he believed, like Hegel after him, that a barrier discovered was a barrier transcended.

NOW, IN ALL OF THIS there is one great similarity with Marx, and one difference no less great. Both these great speculators had reinterpreted human history in a quite new way, one finding the key in the developmental processes of the human mind, the other in the determination of human life by “the mode of production.” In each case, the point of view adopted is the universal of humanity which transcends differences of class, race, or nation. There is, however, an enormous difference. It lies in the fact that Marx carefully separates out what he has to say about the mode of production and man's relation with nature from the entire field of ideas, which he calls “ideologies.”

This familiar distinction between base and superstructure allows the Marxist to become nothing less than the monopolist of understanding. He can dominate the entire intellectual field by revealing all other opinion as more or less distorted accounts of the truth that can only be found by understanding the “material base” of society. Marx makes the entire field of science, philosophy, religion, and the rest

dependent upon the mode of production, and then claims that he alone understands that mode. This is the point of insisting throughout the early works that man must eat, and that the handmill gives us feudalism while the steam mill gives us capitalism. It is a brilliant rhetorical move because, so long as it succeeds, it means that anyone who attempts to contest the Marxist theory finds himself cordoned off in the world of ideology, where his utterances may be smartly disposed of as the distorted reflections of the true determinants in the mode of production. Marx's *Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) is a full-scale deployment of this technique against Proudhon.

But there's no such thing as a free throw in intellectual gymnastics. The careful crafting of Marxism to produce this polemical superiority is paid for by severe intellectual problems; and Leon Pompa formulates them neatly in the form of a dilemma as he argues that Vico's recognition of the reality of ideas makes him a guide to history superior to Marx.

Whereas Vico discovered the hidden rationality of strange customs and beliefs previously thought irrational, and thus extended the range of our understanding, Marx discovered the hidden irrationality even of the supposedly rational beliefs we now hold. Only by revolutionising the mode of production can modern man transform the ideas by which they live into something rational. “With the change of the economic foundation”, we learn, “the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.” This superstructure is composed of “the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms. . . .”

The evident problem is that the transformation cannot be complete since, if it were, we would not even retain these trans-epochal categories with which we might characterise the process. Marx himself was not entirely insensitive to this difficulty, remarking in the *Communist Manifesto* (1847) that:

“... one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by another. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms.”

Perhaps. But this does not save him from a dilemma which may be put at its simplest as follows: either the argument is that ideas change with changes of circumstances, which is hardly the dramatic discovery of a whole new truth; or with each new epoch, ideas are totally transformed, in which case it is difficult to know how we might categorise them as “legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic. . . .” Marx is both claiming to speak from a universal standpoint, and simultaneously denying the possibility that such a standpoint can exist.

As a piece of revolutionary *praxis*, such doctrines are clearly seductive and brilliantly persuasive; but as theory they cannot be taken very seriously. It is this dual character of Marx's thought which accounts for its intellectual vulnerability. Since his work must culminate in a future Revolution, Marx must reorganise the past into a tidy series of corresponding discontinuities: the idea of revolution orders

human experience into tidy epochs. For practical reasons, again, Marx must locate the dynamic of change somewhere else than in human nature itself, for:

“had he located the profit-motive in, for example, an apparently invariant ‘human nature’ . . . then it would have been difficult for him to argue that a qualitatively different society was a realistic possibility.”⁹

Similarly, the sets of ideas classified as “legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic” must be exhibited as totally derivative from the mode of production; for only then would a theory of the mode of production be able to claim a monopoly of understanding. The secret of Marxism (to parody Marxism’s own way of thinking) lies in the fact that its rhetorical strengths are theoretical weaknesses.

AS EXPONENTS OF the new science of the rise of man, Marx and Vico yield many “affinities” which are explored in this particular Tagliacozzo volume; and for most of the contributors it is Vico who is the more profound figure. He supplied mankind with a special sort of runabout inference ticket which was to allow men to journey freely to the remotest corners of time and space—always so long as they stayed within the human world. Social scientists, and especially historians and anthropologists, have been using some version of this ticket ever since.

On the other hand, it has usually been later writers—of whom, in a limited way, Marx is one—who have rediscovered Vico’s human world and shown us how we may explore its hidden rationalities. And this, in turn, would suggest that Vico is merely of antiquarian interest as the great, but neglected, precursor of later writers.

This is certainly not the view of Sr Tagliacozzo and most of his contributors. He is a kind of one-man Vico industry in himself, and he has already edited a number of volumes of exactly the same kind in which the academic conference has been employed as a device for spreading the message about Vico’s importance. In Britain, scholars like Leon Pompa and Isaiah Berlin have written brilliantly and at length about him.¹⁰

⁹ Terrell Carver, “Marx—and Hegel’s Logic”, *Political Studies* (Vol. XXIV, No. 1, March 1976), pp. 64-65.

¹⁰ Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder* (Hogarth Press, 1976); Leon Pompa, *Vico: A Study of the “New Science”* (Cambridge University Press, 1975).

¹¹ In Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Michael Mooney, and Donald Phillip Verene (eds), *Vico and Contemporary Thought* (Macmillan, 1980), pp. 56-57.

¹² Tagliacozzo’s introductory remarks to *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, p. 4.

Vico’s attraction is in part, no doubt, that of any man of genius who writes of large and popular issues; but there is, I think, more to it than that. He conveys, in his excitement at his own thoughts, something both occult and prophetic. It is not every philosopher who begins his exposition with a long account of a picture symbolising what he has to say. Vico’s style owes something to those poets he thought were founders of the human race. Responding to an essay of Leon Pompa’s which brought the coherence of Vico’s argument into question, the great American *doyen* of Vichian studies, Max H. Fisch, characterised the *New Science* as “an inexhaustible treasure trove of precious insights, quotable sayings, adumbrations of later discoveries, thought-provoking claims. . . .”¹¹ And Tagliacozzo, recognising the dangers of relegation contained in continuously harping on Vico’s claim to primacy in ideas developed later, argued that Vico is disadvantaged when described as a forerunner. For one thing, goes the argument, he was more influential than has hitherto been realised; and for another, his doctrines have been taken up piecemeal: “Those who have sought to appropriate his thought have actually disembowelled it, so as to invoke his authority to support their side in an ideological battle. . . .”¹² For Tagliacozzo, Vico remains the fountainhead of human understanding, because he alone saw the process of humanity in all its fullness; and everything that has come after has been some merely partial or fragmentary echo of that truth about human history. A return to Vico thus becomes a condition of the restoration of wholeness to contemporary human self-understanding.

The suggestion is, I suspect, that we are thought to have fallen into the condition so vividly described by Vico himself, at the end of his masterpiece. It is a state in which peoples,

“. . . rotting in that ultimate civil disease . . . like so many beasts, have fallen into the custom of each man thinking only of his own private interests and have reached the extreme of delicacy, or better of pride, in which like wild animals they bristle and lash out at the slightest displeasure. Thus no matter how great the throng and press of their bodies, they live like wild beasts in a deep solitude of spirit and will, scarcely any two being able to agree since each follows his own pleasure or caprice. . . . In this way, through long centuries of barbarism, rust will consume the misbegotten subtleties of malicious wits that have turned them into beasts made more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been by the barbarism of sense.

The New Science, para 1106

In terms of this prophetic vision, Vico clearly engages the mind on a front certainly no less wide than Marx himself; and may well provoke us to wonder which is the elephant and which is the gnat.

DOCUMENT

“It thinks inside me . . .”

Fassbinder, Germans & Jews—By HENRYK M. BRODER



EVER HEAR the one about the Jew in the German railway station? This poor Jew arrives at a station in Germany, carrying everything he owns in one battered old suitcase. Spotting an elderly gentleman studying the timetables, the Jew goes up to him and asks, “Excuse me, sir, are you an anti-Semite?”

The man is shocked, “How dare you ask me such a question?”, he indignantly replies.

“No hard feelings”, says the

Jew and moves on to a woman standing nearby. “Excuse me, madam, are you an anti-Semite?” Her reaction is the same.

The scene repeats itself several times before the Jew finally meets up with a pleasant-looking, respectable couple and asks them the same question, “Pardon me, are you by any chance anti-Semites?”

“We certainly are”, says the man. “We detest the Jews, the whole stinking lot of them.”

“Ah”, replies the Jew, “what a pleasure to meet such honest people. Would you mind keeping an eye on my suitcase for me?”

It would be interesting to try a similar experiment in a German theatre or concert hall. Just before the performance begins, I would like to come on stage and ask everyone who does not like Jews to raise his right hand. I am quite certain not a single hand would go up. You might just as well ask wife-beaters and child-abusers to raise their hands.

The real problem with anti-Semitism in Germany is not that it exists, but that nobody is willing to own up to it. It is not the open anti-Semite who is perverse, but the society he lives in, a society which believes it can do away with a phenomenon simply by claiming it does not exist.

In his *Reflections on the Jewish Question*, Sartre claimed that anti-Semitism was a “passion.” The early Zionist Leo Pinsker, on the other hand, wrote in his 1882 essay “Auto-Emancipation” that “Judophobia” was a “disease” which had been passed on for over 2,000 years and was, as such, “incurable.” Whether one views it as a passion or as an hereditary cultural disease, in the long run the suppression of so vital an urge and the refusal to allow it any free form of expression is bound to lead to serious neuroses or perversions, or both. And if the urge is unable to achieve satisfaction along a direct path, it will be forced to seek relief in an indirect manner.

Just as dirty jokes are always indicative of some repressed desire, so it is no coincidence that in Germany, where anti-Semitism “officially” does not exist, the joke about how to fit 20 Jews into a VW Beetle is part of the standard reper-

THE late Richard Crossman once told me of his vain and hopeless attempt, when he was a member of the Palestine Commission in 1945, to convince Chaim Weizmann that he was a friend, a sympathiser, a “pro-Semite.” Weizmann was firm, if genial. “My dear Crossman, you are a non-Jew, a Gentile, and cannot truly understand or have reliable sympathies. If you could admit to being, as the rest of the world is, anti-Semitic, then we can talk and negotiate and perhaps even wind up being friends. . . .”

How much more is the recent relationship between Jews and Germans plagued by such deep doubts about true understanding and reliable emotions! Still, we have over thirty years in the pages of this journal never subscribed to the facile, often frivolous, political identification of German history or the “Teutonic psyche” with an ineradicable anti-Semitism. Weizmann even found friends in the post-War Germany, and Ben Gurion (in an historic diplomatic and personal reconciliation) embraced Konrad Adenauer. The West German Republic gave enormous economic assis-

tance (“making good”, it was formally called) to the new state of Israel. Bonn was not Weimar, and there was little anti-Semitism of significance; on the contrary, there was—as Lord Weidenfeld emphasised in his article in last month’s *ENCOUNTER* (“The Age of Frankfurt”, February)—a new and enlightened cultural atmosphere which impressed visiting Jews and Gentiles alike.

HAS ANYTHING CHANGED? It would be melodramatic to think that the foolish and misguided “Bitburg” affair marked any kind of turning-point. Indeed the public speeches on the ill-starred occasion (the texts of Reagan, Kohl, and especially President Weizsäcker) were noble, and memorably so. And yet. . . . In Frankfurt I found a new and quite inexplicable prejudice. Writers I knew, and politicians I respected, seemed to be seized by some new attitude, or idea, or dialectic. Whatever it was, it struck me as dangerously wayward. They wanted their “Fassbinder.” He just had to be performed.

toire of every elementary school student. Their teachers are always "deeply dismayed" at hearing such things, at a loss to understand "where they pick them up." Where indeed?

The classic trinity of Jews, anti-Semitism, and anti-Semites would appear to have vanished from Germany. Not only have the Jews, with the exception of a token remainder, disappeared from German society, but, with them, the anti-Semites. All that is left is a floating anti-Semitic potential, a kind of platonic hate affair, with neither Jews nor anti-Semites to breathe life into it.

So it would appear. But the appearance is a deceptive one, the result of a mutual misunderstanding.

The Jews labour under the belief that anti-Semitism must not and, therefore, cannot exist after Auschwitz; that the anti-Semites themselves would have to be too exhausted, or, at least, too ashamed of themselves, to muster the necessary forces for new endeavours. And the officially non-existent anti-Semites, on the other hand, believe that a condemnation of Auschwitz and the systematic murder of Jews would have to be sufficient evidence of their goodwill to place them beyond even the slightest suspicion.

What the Jews have failed to realise is that anti-Semitism in Germany today does not exist *in spite of* Auschwitz, but, much rather, *because of it*, because it serves as a constant reminder to people of their own misdeeds and failings. The anti-Semites, on the other hand, tend to forget that Auschwitz was an atypically excessive outburst in the history of anti-Semitism, and that it cannot be taken as a standard. It is quite possible, in other words, to be opposed to Auschwitz and still be anti-Semitic. In fact, a condemnation of Nazi anti-Semitism is a necessary pre-condition for any viable new form of anti-Semitism which does not wish to discredit itself from the outset.

This misunderstanding was a cooperative effort on the part of Jews and Germans alike. Both sides had an equal interest in side-stepping the reality, neither wished to see the post-War "rehabilitation" of Germany (not mere *Wiedergutmachung* but also *Wiedergutwerden*) threatened by unpleasant insights into the true situation.

The level of anti-Semitism at any given time was measured

by the success or failure of radical nationalist parties at the ballot box, while studies documenting latent or manifest anti-Semitism in other sectors were categorically dismissed as "unfounded." And by none were such studies considered more "questionable" than by the official representatives of the Jewish community, who, as the author of one study put it, seemed to think everything was fine as long as leading politicians continued making solemn speeches at the opening of "Brotherhood Week" each year.

AND NOW IT turns out that there is a spot of trouble in paradise. Things are not quite what they ought to be. Jewish community leaders, who showed no hesitation in calling the police when their own buildings were being occupied by squatters, are now going around trying to take public theatres by force. And Germany's leading liberal newspapers, unflagging in their sympathy for the squatters, describe the stopping of a single theatre performance as an "intolerable breach of law." The "Frankfurt Follies"—a political farce in several acts, performances in the main lobby—compliments of Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

I do not know whether Fassbinder himself was anti-Semitic, but it is not very likely. The fact that he allows anti-Semitic characters a place in his play *Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod* (*Garbage, the City and Death*), says nothing about his own feelings.

"It's the Jew's fault, since he makes us feel guilty, just being there [one character says]. If he had stayed where he came from, or if they'd gassed him, I'd be able to sleep better tonight. I'm not joking. That's the way it thinks inside me.

(*Und Schuld hat der Jud, weil er uns schuldig macht, denn er ist da. Wäre er geblieben, wo er herkam, oder hätten sie ihn vergast, ich könnte heute besser schlafen. Sie haben vergessen, ihn zu vergasen. Das ist kein Witz, so denkt es in mir. . . .*)"

It would be difficult to find a better, more pointed expression

The burning issue was a rather mediocre, if explosively ambivalent, play by the late Rainer Werner Fassbinder, an interesting writer and an extraordinary film-maker (see Ronald Hayman's article in ENCOUNTER, February 1985). Should it, could it be performed? Wouldn't not doing so amount to "repression . . . censorship . . . thought-control"? The fact of the matter is that the play's text had been published years ago; it was freely argued about in all of the Bonn Republic's media; Fassbinder's views of "garbage . . . Jewish speculators . . . Frankfurt misery" were matters of public knowledge and controversy. "No, a play is a play, and our theatre must play it!" Suddenly the decades of reconciliation and "new brotherhood" were lost in the heat of altercation. One high cultural official told me that if his "Schauspielhaus" didn't put on the play now, and "get it out of the way" (even if there were Jewish demonstrations that made the front page of the "New York Times"), then it might prove embarrassing for his "Staatsoper" when in the next year an Israeli ensemble was to be welcomed. I

listened during the Frankfurt Book Fair to hours of this kind of curious, and inexplicably perverse, logic.

So perhaps a viewpoint of the current relations between Germans and Jews that is rather less benevolent than the one we have on occasion presented in these pages is appropriate.

HENRYK M. BRODER is a young liberal-left German journalist who lives half of the year in Jerusalem. He is now completing what he calls "a flaming tract" on the subject (soon to be published), and his original article appeared first in the columns of the "Jerusalem Post." It is, we think, a passionate and disturbing document which, in the light of the "Fassbinder Skandal" and its consequences, is worth a European republication.

M.J.L.

of the persecutor's rage at the sight of the victims who survived, whose very existence is a constant, barely tolerable provocation for him. Here in Fassbinder's play, the authentic voice of anti-Semitism *because* of Auschwitz can be heard.

The play itself can only be considered anti-Semitic in the sense that it has served as a catalyst to anti-Semitic reactions. It wakes sleeping dogs and, in that sense, is both instructive and confusing. We have taken a giant step towards recognising reality.

CONSIDER THE DIRECTOR of the Frankfurt Theatre where *Garbage* was to have been performed, Günther Rühle. In his former capacity as *feuilleton* editor of one of Germany's most respected newspapers, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Rühle was active for many years in the effort to prevent Fassbinder's play from being performed. In his new job, Rühle now considers the very same play's performance virtually indispensable for Frankfurt's cultural advancement. This is not to be construed as opportunism, however. It is merely an instance of unswerving loyalty towards any given employer at any given time—a much-sought and highly-admired virtue in the world of commerce.

The fact that Rühle also announced that the days of "restraint" towards the Jews had "come to an end" (*das Ende der Schonzeit*) received only marginal attention in the heat of the debate. But what exactly does the end of "restraint" mean? What else can it mean but that the hunting season can now resume?

Rühle would, naturally, be the first to say that that is not what he meant. Maybe he does not think that way. But that is the way "it thinks inside" him, just as "it thinks inside (*so denkt es in ihm*)" Fassbinder's hero, Hans von Gluck.

When Rühle, in proclaiming the end of "restraint", also announces a return to "normality" in German-Jewish relations, he is merely offering a socially acceptable version of the same demands the neo-Nazi newspapers have been printing for years: "It's time to draw the line—enough is enough!" One of Germany's most prominent theatre critics, Peter Iden, noted in a television discussion that the Germans were "no longer prepared to let themselves be humiliated by the Jews." It would appear to be thinking inside Mr Iden, too: "*Deutsche, wehrt Euch. . . !* (Germans, defend yourselves!)"

For the sake of clarity, it should be pointed out that a return to a state of "normality" cannot be proclaimed quite as one-sidedly as its end was announced in 1933. And, just for the record, it is also extremely difficult to imagine that anybody would be calling for "normalisation" today if six million Germans had been killed by Jews as recently as 40 or 50 years ago—particularly when one considers the trouble we have had being forgiven for a single, unproved murder some 2,000 years ago.

OR TAKE Heiko Holefleisch, for another example. Heiko Holefleisch was in charge of production of the Fassbinder play in Frankfurt. In an interview with a *Ma'ariv* correspondent, he spoke out against making a taboo of anti-Semitism.

"What I mean by making a taboo of anti-Semitism [he explained] I will try to answer in a very personal way. I was born in 1949. I'm the same age as this Republic. I was born into a non-Jewish, German family. My father was a member of the Nazi Party.

While I was growing up, it was a constant problem for me to try and comprehend the discrepancy between the way I saw my father—whom I loved very much, and who seemed very humane to me—and his political convictions, his former political convictions.

The picture I got in school was of this monster, this demon Hitler and his loyal followers, and there was a lot about that which I didn't understand. I knew I would have to learn to comprehend this if I was ever going to be able to grow up, as a German, after the War."

What Heiko Holefleisch is concerned with, in his touchingly awkward statement, has been nicely expressed by the critic Eike Geisel as "family reconciliation (*Familienzusammenführung*)."

It has been thinking inside Heiko Holefleisch, too. The sons cannot be expected to live their whole lives with a demonic image of their fathers in their hearts. They want to rehabilitate their fathers, "de-monsterfy" or "de-demonise" them, so to speak. That is why the taboo on anti-Semitism has to be lifted—for their fathers' sakes, so they will finally be able to "grow up as a German after the War." Happy graduation, you're a grown boy now.

It would seem the children of the persecutors do not have it any easier than the children of the concentration-camp survivors. I suppose I ought to be grateful my parents ended up on the right side of the barbed wire. That is the way it sometimes "thinks" inside me.

OR TAKE THE *Vorwärts*, the official newspaper of the Social Democratic Party and traditional vanguard of the labour movement in Germany. One month before the scheduled première of the Fassbinder play, the *Vorwärts* ran a background article, entitled "CAN JEWS NEVER BE EVIL? (*Sind Juden niemals böse?*)". In that article the "rich Jew" is removed from the cover of anonymity and put on full display. The "rich Jew" of Frankfurt, unnamed in Fassbinder's play, truly exists, we are told. "Half of Frankfurt" belongs to him and he is "considered one of the richest men in Germany." The article then proceeds to record the "fact" that "the land speculation business in Frankfurt is mainly in Jewish hands."

Interested as I was in learning who the other half of Frankfurt belongs to, I asked the *Vorwärts* to supply me with more detailed information regarding these apparently well-known facts. I also wanted to know exactly where the "rich Jew" fits in among the Flicks, Thyssens, Fuggers, Henkels, Reemtsmas, and other landed and industrial aristocrats whose names actually make up the list of the richest men in Germany.

And I was particularly interested in seeing the statistical basis for the statement that the Frankfurt land speculation business is "mainly in Jewish hands." Is there a special office where land speculators are registered on the basis of their religious and cultural backgrounds? Surely no responsible

democratic journalist would make a statement like that without being able to back it up.

I am still waiting for a reply.

IN A SOCIETY not contaminated with anti-Semitism there would be no reason not to put on a play in which the leading character is a nasty, despicable Jew. The innocent, playfully teasing question posed by the *Vorwärts* article "Can Jews Never be Evil?" is not really a question, and it is not looking for an answer. What the article does is to offer a socially acceptable form for expressing a resentment which has been lying dormant for too long, and for once again enjoying the thrill of seeing the words "speculation", "business", and "Jewish hands" side by side in the same sentence. Wouldn't it be simpler, and healthier, for them to simply pound the table with their fists and shout, "*Sau-juden!*" with all their hearts? That might at least have some therapeutic value.

Instead of carrying on endless and fruitless debates about the "freedom of the arts" and the "inadmissibility of censorship", it would be far more satisfying, and more honest, to simply admit that Fassbinder's play states loudly and clearly exactly the way "it thinks" inside many people in Germany. Much like a pornographic movie, the main attraction of the play lies in its allowing the audience to hear their own thoughts spoken out loud without having to stand up for them.

All these strange comments, responses, self-portrayals and self-exposures are owed to a single play, written on a flight to New York (or Los Angeles or Dakar or wherever), and about whose real artistic value critics are anything but unanimous. And now, before receiving a single proper performance, it has been cancelled in Frankfurt (although rushed hastily into a performance in Kassel).

The Jewish community of Frankfurt can chalk up a victory and everyone who always knew about "the power of the Jews" has been given new fuel for his thoughts.

I am not certain whether the performance of the play would have been a lesser evil than its cancellation; but I am fairly certain that the anti-Fassbinder front is celebrating a victory which will soon be proving itself highly Pyrrhic in nature. Last November, German Television's prime-time schedule included the film *Shadow of the Future* (*Schatten der Zukunft*), by Wolfgang Bergmann.

The film was originally scheduled to be shown on 13 November, until at the last moment it occurred to someone in the programming department that the date was embarrassingly close to the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, that notorious day of the 1938 pogrom. For reasons of piety, it was re-scheduled for two weeks later.

The film's subject is a question, namely, "What do we Germans have to do with the Israel/Palestine conflict?" Here, again, we are dealing with a tactical question, and in a press release, the young film-maker gives us his answer:

"Due to our historic experiences, we Germans have a special responsibility toward peace and international

understanding in the world. The First World War and the expulsion and extermination of Europe's Jews by National Socialism created many problems, a number of which remain unsolved to this day. . . . Today, we Germans still have a cramped relationship toward Jews, as can be seen in the rising trend of animosity toward foreigners."

Bergmann, a progressive among film-makers with a marked preference for referring to himself in public as "We Germans", wants to help loosen up this cramped relationship. He does this by asking further questions bearing on the subject of his film: the special German responsibility toward peace and international understanding:

"Can I, as a German, criticise Israel without becoming anti-Semitic, and do I have the right to be concerned about the future of the Jews in Israel? Are the bombing attacks on Jewish restaurants and travel agencies spontaneous anti-Israel protests or a renewal of the old anti-Semitism? Or is it even possible that Israel's politics are provoking new animosity towards Jews?"

By posing the question as to whether the attacks on Jewish restaurants are spontaneous anti-Israel protests or revivals of the old anti-Semitism, the film-maker gives us strong reasons to suspect that his problems are not merely of a political, but also of a mental nature.

At the start of his film, Bergmann reveals a further dilemma. As photographs showing mountains of dead bodies in a concentration camp are shown, the narrative voice tells us:

"My father took me to see a film which was supposed to explain what had happened in the Second World War. He had been forced to be a part of it, too, hadn't had any choice, he said.

Some of those pictures I still cannot forget. How was it possible? Why hadn't my parents known? Why hadn't they offered any resistance?"

Like Holefleisch, Bergmann has a family problem. He asks why his parents hadn't known what was being done, implicitly accepting as a fact the idea that they really hadn't known. Presumably, his father went to a film explaining the War so that he, too, could find out what had happened in that War he had been forced to be a part of.

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Rather than confronting his parents and asking whether it was truly possible that they did not have *any* idea about what was happening all around them, Bergmann prefers to show his “concern about the future of the Jews in Israel.” Bergmann shows footage of Jewish children standing behind the fences of Auschwitz, their shirt-sleeves rolled up, exposing the numbers tattooed on their arms; the narrator speaks:

“These are the liberated children of Auschwitz. They are a warning to us all. What has come of their longing for a more human future and a more secure home in Israel?”

For a brief moment the viewer is left to believe he will be seeing a film about these survivors. Then, suddenly, it becomes clear what the liberated children of Auschwitz are being used for.

A low whistling sound grows louder, draws nearer. It is the sound of a falling bomb. At the very moment it is heard exploding, the faces on the screen change. The children of Auschwitz are gone and now we see the war-torn city of Beirut, the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Shatilla, and the war’s victims—the children. In his commentary, the filmmaker tells us that “a Jewish man living in Germany” had been reminded of Babi Yar, where the SS had had Jews slaughtered by the native Ukrainians, and even Bergmann himself said he had been unable to keep himself from “drawing comparisons with National Socialism.”

The message is clear. The Israelis are doing to the Palestinians what the Nazis did to the Jews. This is Bergmann’s contribution to what the philosopher Jürgen Habermas calls “*die Entsorgung der Vergangenheit* (the de-problematisation of the past)”, the next step after successful “family reconciliation.” The Jews take on the roles of the Nazis, the Palestinians take on the role of the Jews—and Wolfgang Bergmann is there to stand up for the persecuted and fight the persecutors who, in this case, conveniently happen to be Jewish Nazis. Bergmann now has the chance to make up for the resistance his parents neglected to offer—and, killing a second bird with the same stone, to eliminate any residual guilt he may have felt toward his parents’ victims. It all works out very nicely.

“How is it possible”, asks Bergmann, “that the Jews, who

had suffered so much themselves, could wage such a brutal war in Lebanon?” Ironic, isn’t it? After all, weren’t the concentration camps primarily concerned with rehabilitation? And wasn’t the purpose of submitting the inmates to such severe trials solely to make better persons of them?

The closet anti-Semites, as Sartre might have put it, can only be enjoying their secret lust behind disguises. They clothe their passion in “the garb of theoretical proposals.” They speak of the need to do away with taboos, of the end of restraint, and the start of normalisation. They want to know whether bombing Jewish restaurants might not be a form of spontaneous anti-Israel protest, and complain about their cramped relationship with the Jews. But whatever garb they clothe it in, what they mean is always the same: after 40 years of restraint, when the whole nation was required to love them, it ought finally to be allowed again for Germans not to like Jews.

It is not the characters in Fassbinder’s play who behave like anti-Semites, but the people in the theatre audience who shout to the Jewish demonstrators occupying the stage:

“*Kommen Sie nicht immer wieder mit ihrem Auschwitz!* (Leave us alone with your Auschwitz!).”

Your Auschwitz? Whose Auschwitz?

“Without Auschwitz, no Israel”, says Bergmann, citing Nahum Goldmann, and he then expands the thought to “Without Auschwitz, no expulsions of the Palestinians.” That may or may not be correct, but Bergmann would do far better to concern himself with a slightly different problem: *Without anti-Semitism in Germany, no Auschwitz*. But that would entail focusing his attention on his own parents again, and the whole projection of both his problems and those of German history on to the Judean desert would be spoiled and German television audiences would be robbed of a chance to see one more pretentious and superfluous contribution to their evening entertainment.

Oy gevalt! What complicated manoeuvres, what amazing feats of emotional acrobatics, just to express a feeling of distaste which the honest anti-Semite Wagner described without the slightest embarrassment: “Whenever one sees a Jew, one immediately senses a feeling of revulsion. . . .”

It may be a long time before a Jew in Germany is able to find an anti-Semite he can trust to watch his suitcase.

Someone’s Summer

Speed suddenly converting back to mass,
precipitating into a game against the odds,
a weaving, boxer-blind, into punishment.

They glimpsed infinity’s dazzling wall
bricked in behind the shattering screen.
Then damage slowed—to someone’s summer

lying bereaved in gritty pools;
burnt metal’s cordite reek;
a motorbike wheel ticking aimless prayers.

And they got out and held each other tight.

Simon Rae

EAST & WEST

On Failing to Get Along with the Russians

Yugoslav Testimony—By DAVID FLOYD



IN JULY of last year Yugoslavia's Prime Minister, Mrs Milka Planinc, paid an official visit to Moscow. It was not, from a practical point of view, very successful. She met the new boss in the Kremlin, young Misha Gorbachov (54) and her Soviet counterpart, old Nikolai Tikhonov (80), and had talks which were said to have been "marked by frankness and mutual understanding"—which is Kremlinese for rather tough exchanges. The main purpose of Mrs Planinc's trip to Moscow was to extract from the Russians some practical support to help Yugoslavia out of its post-Tito crisis. None was forthcoming. It appears that only "Western capitalist governments" and their banks are ready to help the non-aligned Yugoslavs out of their difficulties. The Russians are keen enough to meddle in Yugoslav affairs, but not if it costs them hard cash; they have so many other good causes. In any case, the Russians are by no means convinced that the Yugoslav Communists are really worth helping: they attach far too much importance to their own independence, and some of them would seem to be plain "anti-Soviet." Mrs Planinc was not heard to say that she had found Mr Gorbachov a man she could "do business with."

She had in fact been given a good telling-off by the new Soviet leader for having, amongst other things, permitted the publication in Yugoslavia of the second volume of memoirs of Veljko Mićunović. It was, he told her, "anti-Soviet and offensive" and typical of the behaviour of the Yugoslav press and publishing as a whole. He advised her to take a firm ideological grip on the situation, assuming, of course, that Mrs P. exercised the same absolute powers as he has in Russia to permit or prevent the publication of every single word. But Gorbachov—not a widely travelled man—is mistaken: Yugoslavia today enjoys a good deal of freedom of speech and expression, even if it is by no means a free-for-all.

Who then is Veljko Mićunović? I knew him (he died in

1982), and he struck me as one of the ablest and bravest and above all most honest of the "Partisan" generation in Yugoslavia—of the men who were drawn into Communism in their student years in the 1930s, who played a leading part in Tito's forces during the War, and who formed the backbone of the Tito régime and the resistance to Stalin in the post-War years.

Mićunović was a Marxist, a Communist, and certainly a loyal member of the Yugoslav Communist Party. But, perhaps more important, he was also a Montenegrin and a member of a family with a long history of fighting (and dying) for the freedom of their mountainous country. If ever Mićunović's Marxism were to come into conflict with his patriotism there was never any doubt about which would take priority, and they did come into conflict. When the Yugoslav Communists were ousted from the Cominform in 1948, Mićunović did not hesitate for a moment in condemning Stalin's action and in backing Tito. His speech at the Congress of the Yugoslav Party following the break was one of the most outspoken in its criticism of Moscow. Later, in charge of counter-intelligence, he was responsible for keeping the Russians at bay in Yugoslavia.

It came as a surprise, therefore, after Stalin died and Khrushchev sought reconciliation with Yugoslavia, that Tito chose Mićunović to go as Ambassador to Moscow to try to restore reasonable relations with the Russians. Mićunović recounted his experiences as Ambassador in Moscow from 1956 to 1958 in the first volume of his memoirs, *Moscow Diary*.¹ He described his friendship with Khrushchev, his insider's view of the Kremlin and the Soviet leaders, and his fruitless efforts to persuade the Russians that the Yugoslav Communists were genuinely ready to be good friends and allies of the Soviet Union but were none the less determined to preserve their own independence and sovereignty—to be a friend but not a "satellite" on the East European model. Though Mićunović could not claim to have succeeded in making the Russians understand, he fought a good fight.

Back in Belgrade, Mićunović became one of Tito's closest advisers on foreign policy. But his outspokenness led on one occasion to a stand-up row with the Yugoslav autocrat which made further close relations impossible. Mićunović was sent to Washington as Ambassador for five years: and then—to his great surprise—he was again sent to Moscow. His account of these years (1969-71) makes up the second volume of his memoirs² to which Gorbachov took such exception. On his return to Belgrade he served as a member of the Yugoslav

¹ Veljko Mićunović, *Moscow Diary*. With an introduction by George Kennan (Chatto & Windus, London, and Doubleday, New York, 1980).

² Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske Godine, 1969/71* (Jugoslovenska Revkja, Belgrade, 1984). An English edition, *The Moscow Years, 1969-71*, is to be published by Collins/Harvill.

"Presidency" until, in July 1974, he suffered a stroke that forced him to retire from political life.

It was only then that Mićunović had the time to set about editing his Moscow diaries for publication. That he did so was a remarkable feat of sheer will-power prompted by a fierce determination to record the truth about Moscow's treatment of Yugoslavia. Having lost the use of his right arm he taught himself to type with his left hand. It took him three years to complete the work and, despite Soviet attempts to prevent it, the first volume was published in 1977. It was an immediate success in Yugoslavia, and an English edition (which I translated) appeared in 1980 and was well received in the West. Despite a steady deterioration in his health Mićunović went ahead to prepare a second volume to cover his second stay in Moscow. His devoted daughter recalls in her moving introduction how it was completed:

"Veljko Mićunović, revolutionary, soldier, diplomat and statesman, snatched the text of his second book, so to speak, from the very jaws of death. He put a full stop to the last sentence of the manuscript on August 1, 1982, as an ambulance was waiting in front of the house to take him to the hospital where he died that same night, on August 2, 1982."

Mićunović's second volume of memoirs also contains some remarkable insights into the behaviour of the Soviet leaders—his first encounter with Kosygin after his arrival in Moscow (with the Soviet Prime Minister making it abundantly clear

that Mićunović was no longer regarded as a friend), his meetings with Gromyko and Brezhnev, and the latter's barnstorming visit to Belgrade. But there is inevitably less in the way of "inside" stories of life in the Kremlin. Mićunović had no more access to the Soviet leaders this time round than had any Western ambassador. Why then was Gorbachov so incensed at the publication of the second volume?

THE ANSWER MUST BE that it is because the second volume of the memoirs contains Mićunović's detailed account of the state of Soviet-Yugoslav relations and his mature judgment concerning the nature and long-term aims of the Soviet foreign policy. Few people have ever been better qualified to offer such an analysis, and the Russians are naturally annoyed that their way of conducting their relations, even with a potentially friendly government, and their real objectives should be exposed in this way.

After several years spent in Moscow and dealing with the Russians, Mićunović had no illusions about the "fundamentally expansionist" nature of Soviet foreign policy or about the Soviet leaders' readiness to use force to achieve their ends. What is more, he believed that, in Soviet eyes, Yugoslavia was a major obstacle to Soviet expansion in its most likely direction—towards the Mediterranean and Africa—and was therefore under direct threat from the Kremlin. He summed up his views in these words:

"Soviet military, economic and political penetration of the Mediterranean area, the Near East and Africa on a massive scale became quite apparent following the Arab defeat in the war with Israel on June 5, 1967. The Soviet presence in a number of countries in this region continues to increase (in Algeria alone, for example, the number of Soviet experts already exceeds six thousand, according to what I was told by Ilichev, Gromyko's deputy).

I do not believe that the Soviet thrust into this area is connected only with the need to aid the Arab countries after they lost the war with Israel, but that it is a matter of long-term policy which has made its first major advances in its expansion of Soviet influence after the Second World War in this direction. In this respect it differs from Soviet behaviour with regard to Western Europe and Asia, where the Soviet Union remains on the defensive in accordance with its national interests, although it is by far the strongest military power in both those continents. For that reason I do not expect the Russians to withdraw from this area even if a peace were signed in the Near East tomorrow."

And he concluded:

"It is true that the basic balance of force between the great powers has not changed, but all the same the disposition of their forces has been changed in an area that is of political, economic and every other significance for Yugoslavia, which falls within the Mediterranean region. Since 1967/68 Yugoslavia is the only territorial obstacle dividing that area of Soviet expansion from the Soviet

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continent (the Warsaw Pact). If the basic assumption is correct—that the Soviet Union did not commit enormous military and economic resources simply to make it easier for Egypt, Syria, and Jordan to arrive at a peace with Israel—then we must reckon with the fact that the Soviet Union remains constantly interested in resolving the strategic problem: the establishment of a territorial link between the Soviet Union (the Warsaw Pact) and this area as an essential precondition for maintaining and consolidating its expansion in the direction of the Mediterranean, Northern Africa (and Africa as a whole), and the Near East....”

Mićunović came to the conclusion that the Russians were reluctant to establish military or naval bases overseas because of the lesson they had been taught in the Cuban crisis in 1962, when they were faced with the prospect of nuclear war with the United States. But he went on:

“The situation is quite the reverse with regard to the Soviet Union’s long-term interest in establishing naval and air bases on the opposite, northern shores of the Mediterranean, i.e. in socialist countries (Yugoslavia and Albania). This problem has been present for a long time in Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia.

The tension in our relations started precisely because we were not prepared to break our own laws and allow Soviet warships to enter our harbours whenever the Russians asked.

The establishment of Soviet military bases on the coasts of Yugoslavia and Albania is only part of the extensive long-term plans the Russians have for linking the northern shores of the Mediterranean with the Soviet Union and the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Even if it were prepared to, Albania alone is not objectively in a position to satisfy Soviet ambitions in this respect, because Yugoslavia would continue to be an obstacle. Looked at from this point of view the policy of supporting a ‘greater Bulgaria’ may also fit in well with this long-term plan. If today nobody opposes the idea of creating a ‘greater Bulgaria’ at Yugoslavia’s expense, why should the same people tomorrow not support the creation of a ‘greater Albania’ and the linking together of these two states on the territory of the [Yugoslav] republics of Macedonia and Serbia?”

In 1961 relations between the Soviet Union and Albania were broken off and the Russians were forced to withdraw their submarines from the base at Vlore. Consequently, as soon as more or less friendly relations had been restored with Yugoslavia in the 1960s the Russians began to press the Yugoslavs to grant the Soviet Navy facilities for repairing and fuelling their warships in Yugoslavia’s ports on the Adriatic. Both Marshal Grechko (the Soviet Defence Minister) and Andrei Gromyko (the Foreign Minister) visited Tito on his island of Brioni to argue their case, which included a demand that Soviet officers and sailors should be able to spend their shore leave in Yugoslavia. Mićunović regarded the Russians’ demand with the greatest suspicion, seeing in it an attempt to establish a Soviet military presence on Yugoslav territory, and he argued strongly against giving in to Moscow or even discussing the question with the Russians at all. The demand

was then dropped for a time; but has doubtless been raised again with Tito’s successors.

ACCORDING TO MIĆUNOVIĆ the Russians considered that the so-called “Brezhnev doctrine” applied to Yugoslavia as much as to the other “socialist” countries of Eastern Europe. There was, in any case, nothing very new in it: “The principles attributed to that doctrine have been an integral part of Soviet foreign policy for at least 25 years”, he says. It committed the Soviet Union and its satellites to intervene by force and to occupy any “socialist” country in which the “interests of socialism” were threatened. “It is taken for granted that the Soviet Government itself decides when and where those interests are under threat”, Mićunović adds.

Mićunović also had views on how the application of the “Brezhnev doctrine” could be resisted:

“Whether or not the ‘Brezhnev doctrine’ is to be applied will depend in future primarily upon the Soviet assessment of the situation. As far as the other countries which are members of the Warsaw Pact and took part along with the Russians in the occupation of Czechoslovakia are concerned, their governments have by so doing already accepted Russian armed intervention in their countries whenever socialism is ‘threatened’ there. As for the other European socialist countries (Romania, Yugoslavia and Albania), the application of the doctrine will depend mainly on whether they are ready to defend their independence and even to go to war if armed force is used against them. That is what is fundamental and most important. Also important is the possible reaction on the part of the West and other states. But that depends equally on the readiness of the threatened countries to defend their independence even by extreme means.”

He underlines one significant detail:

“In this connection it is not out of place to recall that during the [Czechoslovak] crisis in 1968 the Soviet Government was much more impressed by the facts that our airports were placed under the control of the Yugoslav

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Army, that similar steps were taken on the frontiers, and that a plan for a nation-wide defence system was adopted, than it was by the resolution of our League of Communists or the declaration of the Yugoslav government that were published then. . . .”

However well-disposed Soviet officials appeared, Mićunović remained convinced that the Soviet leaders had not lost interest in Yugoslavia and were certainly not reconciled to seeing a “socialist” country slipping out of their sphere of influence.

“The Soviet government continues to have a very considerable and lasting interest in maintaining its presence and influence in Yugoslavia. But its way of achieving those aims is not through worsening relations with us and exerting open pressure on Yugoslavia but quite the reverse: it is by increasing the Soviet presence and developing cooperation with Yugoslavia (always relying on the pro-Soviet ‘healthy forces’ in our country). This was made quite clear in 1968: despite the bitterness of our quarrel, the Russians took very good care not to overstep the mark—that is, to maintain normal inter-state relations.”

“It might be easier for us”, Mićunović commented, “if this interest in Yugoslavia on the part of the Russians were less and of a different kind.”

ONE OF THE ASPECTS OF Soviet policy to which Mićunović took special exception was the Russian officials’ habit of dividing Yugoslav leaders into “anti-Soviet” and “pro-Soviet”—into “enemies” and “healthy elements.” He was well aware of the Russians’ efforts to build up a “fifth column” within Yugoslav society. It was this that lay behind their repeated demand that the Yugoslavs should agree to the creation of a “Soviet-Yugoslav Friendship Society.” Such an organisation would enable the “healthy elements” to get together and, in effect, to organise a pro-Soviet opposition party. When Brezhnev visited Yugoslavia in 1971 this matter was high on his agenda. But the Yugoslavs were adamant in their refusal to allow any such organisation to come into being.

“The Russians probably had in mind setting up such ‘friendship societies’ in all our republics and regions and then organising a central Yugoslav body for the society. What they were about in essence was the creation of a political, pro-Soviet organisation that would operate alongside our League of Communists. The organisation would then become the main support of the Soviet Union in its relations with our country. There was, of course, no question of permitting anything of this kind to be discussed in the talks with Brezhnev.”

The account Mićunović gives of the whole Brezhnev visit is a priceless lesson in the Soviet practice of diplomacy—the Soviet leader’s long haranguing speeches; his dreary

repetition of the Soviet view; his obvious contempt for the Yugoslavs’ “self-managing” socialism; his arrogant identification of himself with Lenin (“Lenin and I have the same opinion about the role and position of the press in a socialist society”); and, finally, the way the Yugoslavs were forced by sheer fatigue to accept most of the Russian-drafted communiqué despite their disagreements with its terms.

As for his (and Lenin’s) view of how the press should behave in a socialist society, Brezhnev explained that:

“when journalists had to write on some subject they were summoned to the competent department in the Central Committee and told what the Party’s views were on the subject and how they had to write. . . .”

I suppose we always knew it was like that, but it is instructive to have it confirmed from the horse’s mouth. No wonder Gorbachov found it difficult to understand how Mrs Planinc could allow Mićunović’s second volume to see the light of day.

It is extremely unlikely that Gorbachov had read either volume of Mićunović’s memoirs before complaining to Milka Planinc. If he had, he would know that it is ridiculous to describe the author as “anti-Soviet” or to suggest that he had been in any way “offensive.” No one could have been more diplomatic than Mićunović in handling the preposterous Russians, who would keep him waiting weeks for a chance to hand over a personal message from Tito to Brezhnev. There were, on the other hand, plenty of occasions when the Russians behaved in a thoroughly “anti-Yugoslav” way and were often deliberately contentious. In 1969, for example, the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow wanted to mount a modest exhibition of photographs and documents to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Yugoslav Communist Party. But the Kremlin was not willing, so soon after the Czechoslovak crisis, to have Yugoslavia’s “independent road to socialism” displayed in the Soviet capital. So they put every possible obstacle in the way of holding the exhibition, even to the point of declaring that there was not a single “suitable hall” available in the whole of Moscow for such a show. Eventually the party’s 50th birthday had to be celebrated in the following year; not a single Soviet official turned up to the opening.

Mićunović rarely spoke his mind in public, for fear of giving offence to his hosts. His speech at the opening of the exhibition “made everything appear normal”, he said. But it wasn’t easy. “We in the embassy in Moscow, who had been studying this sort of behaviour by the Russians at close quarters for some time, had to make a great effort to give the impression that we had not noticed the way the Soviets behaved.”

I am afraid that Mićunović’s comradely restraint continued even after he began the task of editing his diaries. There was still so much that a good comrade could not reveal—at least if he wanted to be published at all. Even so he has provided us with an invaluable guide to how easy it is to fail to get along with the Russians, and also a reminder of the difficulties of writing as one pleases where whole Ministries of Truth are devoted to laundering the facts.

DISCUSSION

Cuba's Past, Nicaragua's Future

"Who Killed the Spirit of '68?"—"No, the Spirit Lives On. . . ."



IF Peter Collier and David Horowitz (ENCOUNTER, September-October 1985) are surprised when their Left-wing friends are offended by the old adage, "Anyone under 40 who isn't a socialist has no heart—anyone over 40 who is a socialist has no brain", they are lucky to have any friends left—if they have. However, the sentiment does accurately reflect the intolerant

views that follow throughout their article.

In the rewrite of their own history (very Stalinist move this), they pick on poor battle-weary, bullied Nicaragua, and compare it with Cuba. Their analogy is correct; but their facts are wrong. Cuba was forced into the waiting arms of Russian Communism by America—does anyone really think that the Bay of Pigs was the first sign of America's aggression towards Cuba's new government? Kennedy had prepared America to invade Cuba in order to protect American financial interests long before she actually invaded. Russia on the other hand offered help, and Cuba, unsurprisingly, accepted. I often wonder how different Cuba would be now if it had been America that had offered help instead.

Nicaragua has shown a superhuman effort (and should we say tolerance?) in trying to court the Western democracies in friendship. And what do we offer in return? Financial aid to the *Contras*; sanctions; and dark mumblings about invasion—for which Grenada was a dry run. Nicaragua is not Grenada. Do Collier and Horowitz really think that Nicaraguans will swarm out in their thousands and welcome American troops with open arms? They are sadly deluded if they do.

Unlike Grenada, the Sandinistas are a democratically elected government, overwhelmingly supported by the population. The elections were overseen by many overseas spectators from the democracies, and not just starry-eyed Leftists but David Steel among others. It is a pity El Salvador failed to get the same world-wide appeal and approval. Support for the *Contras*' fight against so-called "early signs of totalitarianism" will surely drive them towards it. Already President Ortega has been forced by American sanctions to go to Russia for help. Although it is not too late to keep Nicaragua in the democratic camp, time is running out and if we are to keep Nicaragua democratic, we must stop supporting the *Contras*; threatening invasion; or building sanctions.

The most puzzling feature of the article is the portrayal of

the *Contras* as concerned heroes of democracy. The facts belie this. The majority of the *Contra* are ex-thugs of the Somoza régime (a man, incidentally, who bombed his own capital city) not to mention the large proportion of hired mercenaries. Why no list of Sandinista atrocities? I suppose free elections; 80% of property still in private hands; and vastly improved welfare and education, would weaken their shabby argument rather than strengthen it.

With America interfering in so much of the world today, it makes me wonder whether if "Russia is the last of the old European Empires", then is Europe having to make way for the new American Empire? In the same issue of ENCOUNTER, Nirad C. Chaudhuri says that non-Europeans subjugated in the past to European rule as a part of an empire (especially the British Empire) regard the Americans "as the heirs of the British and more dangerous because young." America, with its historical belief in individual freedom and national self-determination, should feel insulted were it not for the rather large grain of truth that this fear holds.

Of all the examples cited, why no mention of Chile? In 1973, a democratically-elected government was ousted in a CIA-backed-and-controlled coup. All opposition was crushed (the figures and details of those killed would probably sicken even Collier and Horowitz if they ever take the trouble to check) and newly developed monetarist theories especially imported from Chicago were tried out on Chile's economy—to its utter detriment. Pinochet's presence in America and the unexpected US Naval exercises off the coast of Chile just days before the coup surely add up to more than just a coincidence; and the evidence continues to pile up. The paradox of America is that wherever she rushes in to defend democracy, democracy is practically always the first casualty.

SUSAN SONTAG's quotation about Communism being simply Left-wing fascism may be true; but where does that leave Marxism? The Leninist-Marxist model that we know today is not the same as Marxism. Lenin preached strict control of the Party apparatus to take power and ruthlessly carry out the Party's orders—issued by a small élite. Marx however said that power would come to the people as a matter of historical inevitability. There are many socialists in democratic countries who are democratically trying to bring this about, and far from limiting freedom, extend and secure it. Of course, the electorate if they so wish can dismiss these socialist governments at election time—and often do. You can no more

blame Marx for Lenin's ruthless foundation of 20th-century totalitarianism than you can blame Christ for the Spanish Inquisition or Christopher Columbus for the slave trade.

While applauding Collier and Horowitz's rejection of the "Left's revolutionary enthusiasms", why throw out the baby with the bath water? What is the matter with the Left's democratic enthusiasms? Has the cross-eyed Right offered them some higher truth that the cross-eyed Left failed to do? It seems to me that they have stayed on the extreme wings of the political spectrum, pausing only to change sides at half-time (or should I say at half life-time?).

THOSE WHO ARE determined to distinguish between dictatorships, either of the Left or the Right, are among the few allies these people have. If Viet Nam was wrong, is Afghanistan more so or less so? If the popular uprising in Poland was justified, was it justified in Iran—and if not, why not? If, as many must decide, one form of oppression is as bad as another, then the only conclusion left is that America and Russia share the same foreign policy, and to offer support to either side merely encourages its continuation. We must recognise the truth for what it is wherever we may find it. Failure to do so means that, like Collier and Horowitz, we perpetually delude ourselves.

Ian Williams

A Reply

THE REAL QUESTION is how people of seemingly good intentions can continue to support Marxist revolutions when those which have succeeded have such relentlessly appalling records. With pious intentions the "progressive" Left has unquestioningly supported some of the most murderous, repressive and economically disastrous social experiments in the 20th century. In the name of "social justice" successive generations of the Left mobilised in "Popular Fronts" have given their hearts and souls to Marxist régimes promoting slave labour, politically-induced famines, mass executions, and ethnic genocide on a scale unmatched in human history. At some point the bankruptcy of Marxism in theory, and the catastrophe of Communism in practice, finally strips the scales from the eyes of a few chastened radicals—like ourselves. But the die-hards remain, eternally innocent and wilfully ignorant. They learn nothing and forget everything. Worse, their ranks are continually swelled by the born-yesterday and the born-again.

Mr Williams's letter is a case in point. The heart of his apologia for the newest band of totalitarians to seize control of a hapless country is summarised in two points, which, supplemented by the slightest addition of uncontroversial detail, refute themselves. Mr Williams argues that:

- (1) "Cuba was forced into the waiting arms of Russian Communism by America";
- (2) "Support for the *Contras* fight against so-called 'early

signs of totalitarianism' will surely drive them towards it."

This argument is vintage Leftism, in which America is blamed not only for dictators like Fidel Castro, but also for their brutal embrace of totalitarianism. This "argument" is absurd on its face. Castro long ago constructed a Soviet mini-state in Cuba and made himself a global agent of Soviet imperialism. This has meant not only supporting its reconquest of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and its current genocidal aggression in Afghanistan, but—more to the Nicaraguan point—providing a mercenary force for its expansion in such far-flung places as Ethiopia, where the Marxist plans of a sadistic ruler have resulted in famine and suffering on a vast scale (which only massive aid from the productive granaries and generous pockets of the capitalist West has prevented from being worse). Now add to this picture the modest salient detail: the current Sandinista rulers of Nicaragua (in programmatic statements both public and private) have declared Castro's Cuba to be their revolutionary model. Totalitarianism is the *aim* of the current Nicaraguan régime, not its last resort. That is why men like Eden Pastora, the guerrilla hero of the anti-Somoza rebellion, and anti-Somoza political leaders like Alfonso Robelo and Arturo Cruz (who, more than petty dictators like Borge, Arce and the Ortega brothers, *made* the Nicaraguan Revolution) are now exiled leaders of the *Contra* rebellion. It is easy and no doubt comforting to believe that the *Contras* are simply a band of renegade cutthroats who yearn for a *Somocesta* return. In fact there are more of Somoza's bullies in the Sandinista Revolutionary Watch Committees than in the *Contra* resistance. The resistance is increasingly composed of Nicaraguan democrats (denied the pluralism which had been cynically promised by the Sandinistas and then withdrawn when they reached power); peasants (dispossessed by the Sandinista collectivisation and threatened by conscription); and Miskito Indians (burned out of their ancestral lands). If Cuba is the model for Ortega & Co. and their aim is a Communist state, it is ludicrous to contend that US support for the anti-Communist forces is driving them in a totalitarian direction.

WHAT ABOUT THE PREMISE that the United States was historically responsible for Cuba's embrace of Soviet totalitarianism in the first place?

This is a "fall-back" position for some on the Left who are embarrassed by the way Castro has prostituted his young men into a mercenary force for Soviet imperialism—a desperate gambit to blame even this crime on the United States. But it also betrays a chauvinism endemic in the Left's attitude towards its Third World heroes. In this patronising perspective the Castros and Ortegas never get credited with the intention of their achievements. Even in rebellion, they remain objects rather than subjects of the historical drama, victims even in their triumphs.

To sustain this viewpoint requires, however, that historical reality be stood on its head. The publication in recent years of Carlos Franqui's indispensable memoir of the early Castro régime (supported by the historical work of other disillusioned Castroists like Maurice Halperin) has removed

the veil from this historical apologia for Fidel, and made its thesis untenable. Far from being driven reluctantly by US antagonism into waiting Soviet arms, the Cuban dictator actively *provoked* the confrontation with Washington in order to force a cautious, apprehensive, and reluctant Moscow to grant that embrace. And the reason Castro sought Soviet protection was not to defend any “third-way socialism”, but because his *intention* from the pre-revolutionary days of the Sierra Maestra was to turn Cuba into a Soviet-style Communist state.

Here are the words of Carlos Franqui who was at Fidel’s side in the Sierra and then in Havana, and who shared the kind of Marxist socialist outlook that Mr Williams finds so hopeful:

“Some of Fidel’s decisions bothered us: state-owned farms [very much like those sending up malign blooms in Nicaragua today] instead of self-regulating cooperative farms. We wanted small-scale agriculture so that we would not be substituting for the old boss a new administrator, for the old owner a new, state owner. But Fidel had an innate distrust of the people; he preferred militarization to organisation. . . . Fidel’s strategy was to compromise the Soviet Union by rapidly deploying the structures of the Soviet state—the Communist Party and the State Security agency. But even the Soviet government was unwilling to comply. . . . All Soviet emissaries, ambassadors—even Khrushchev and Mikoyan—recommended calm and patience. They were all shocked at the accelerated and artificial process of nationalisation they saw us engaged in. The more they worried, the faster Fidel went. He envisioned a new kind of government—a Russian structure, but with himself at the top. . . .”

Family Portrait With Fidel, p. 78

If Mr Williams and other Popular-Fronters would bother to acquaint themselves with the history of Castroism in Cuba, they would find that the Cuban Communist Party opposed the Cuban Revolution up to the last minute, even participating in the cabinet of the Batista dictatorship. But the moment victory was won Castro systematically began to place Cuban Communists in control of the strategic offices of the Revolution, and just as systematically to dismantle and destroy all the indigenous Left organisations—his own *26th of July Movement*, the free and socialist trade-union movement, and the socialist press—that might resist his totalitarian programme.

WITH THEIR MINDS cleared of cant by these realities of Cuba’s past, people like Mr Williams might profit from re-examining Nicaraguan history.

In 1961 three Nicaraguan Marxists made a political pilgrimage to Castro’s new revolutionary Cuba and founded

the *FSLN*—the “vanguard Party” that controls the present Sandinista régime. Over the years, these three—Carlos Fonseca (the prime mover), Silvio Mayorga, and Tomas Borge (Nicaragua’s current Minister of the Interior)—returned to Cuba again and again as eager protégés of its new Communist *caudillo* and worshippers at the altars of his emerging Soviet mini-state. They were the original “Sandinista” leaders, the forerunners. But they were followed by the Ortega brothers and all the other *commandantes*, not only to Castro’s school in Havana, but on to Moscow—the true (and avowed) Mecca of their revolutionary ideals.¹ Havana and Moscow literally were the political schools of the Sandinista leaders. At the feet of Castro (and of the trainers for Brezhnev and Andropov), they gained skills in weaponry and Stalinist theory and acquired the tools for building a totalitarian state.

But while gaining accolades in the Communist capitals they failed to make much headway in Nicaragua itself. And like all Marxist mini-sects (for, even a year before their triumph, they had little popular support) Fidel’s disciples had split into three factions. It made their guerrilla forces weaker still. This was the situation until March 1979, when Fidel Castro stepped directly into the action—intervening in the internal events of Nicaragua in a way that President Jimmy Carter, sensitive to the chorus of world opinion in which Mr Williams plays a piping part, dared not.

Perceiving that the combined pressure of Nicaraguan democrats and the Carter Administration had pushed the deteriorating position of the Somoza régime to a critical stage—and realising that, few as they were, his fractious disciples united would become the strongest armed anti-Somoza force—Castro summoned them all to Havana to make an offer they couldn’t refuse. The offer was Cuba’s military support. It would allow them to prevail in the coming struggle, on condition that they would become one. Under Castro’s guiding hand, the three factions united. And on 7 March 1979 the present ruling “*Sandinista Directorate*” was born in Havana, with Castro’s favourite, most Stalinist, and most ruthless disciples—Minister of Defence Humberto Ortega and Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge—its dominant *commandantes*.

CASTRO’S SUCCESS in Nicaragua is more than an incidental ambition since he has failed so miserably and completely in his own country to realise his revolutionary goals. Cuba is more abjectly dependent on a foreign power, and its population more materially deprived, than it was when he first took power. Like every Marxist revolutionary before him, he has dealt with this failure by instituting a police state so ruthless and pervasive that the cries of suffering at all levels of Cuban society will be stifled before they can erupt in political protest. To pay for the vast Soviet subsidy to his bankrupt economy, and to rekindle his fading revolutionary star, Castro has turned Cuba into a base for the *KGB* and the Soviet military. Cuba’s 225,000-man army and advanced Soviet weaponry make it the second most powerful military force in the Western Hemisphere. With nearly 50,000 combatant troops in Africa (and with deep political and

¹ Fonseca actually wrote a book—*A Nicaraguan in Moscow*—depicting the Soviet Union as a model of the revolutionary future for Latin America.

logistical involvements in terrorist movements in Central America and the Caribbean), Cuba is a spawning-ground of totalitarian influences and a source of constant instability across the globe.

WHATEVER THE PIOUS PROMISES of the Sandinista régime, with Castro as its father and Cuba its model, the reasonable and prudent assumption is to expect a similar development in Nicaragua if the Sandinistas' present stranglehold on the population should be consolidated. If this blow to democracy and freedom were to occur, one can imagine people like Mr Williams saying 20 years hence, when it has become impossible even for them to deny the despotism and menace of the Sandinista rulers, that it was "all the fault of the United States", which drove them to evil back in the time when in fact the *Contras* offered the only alternative to Nicaragua's totalitarian fate.

And this brings us to Mr Williams's final proposition, widely echoed in the European Left:

"If, as many must decide, one form of oppression is as bad as another, then the only conclusion left is that America and Russia share the same foreign policy, and to offer

support to either side merely encourages its continuation."

This notion of equivalence between the US and USSR is morally imbecilic. Twice within living memory, American soldiers have crossed the Atlantic to save Europeans like Mr Williams from defeat and conquest by forces not particularly fastidious about democratic rights and privileges. In the second instance, it should be remembered, the pacifist and Marxist wings of the European Left also sapped the resistance of the Western democracies to an expansionist totalitarian empire, making America's intervention all the more costly and necessary. If Mr Williams finds it so difficult to distinguish between the foreign policies of Russia and the United States, may we make a suggestion? That he take a short trip across the English Channel and then inland a few hundred miles. And on approaching the barbed wire and brick barriers which bisect his continent, that he peer over them into the lands "liberated" by the Red Army more than forty years ago. Let him then explain to the captive peoples who live behind the Iron Curtain that there is no difference between an open society's pluralism and a closed society's tyranny, between (if you will) democracy and totalitarianism, between the United States and the Soviet Empire.

Peter Collier & David Horowitz

Stocktaking

Three score achieved, secured with pen and ink:
Prescriptions free and half fare on the train,
The pension pennies trickle from the bank.

Reductions now at concerts make you blink
And study price-lists with new eyes again.
Three score achieved, secured with pen and ink.

What else is cheaper? Neither food nor drink
But haircuts, inch by inch the same refrain:
The pension pennies trickle from the bank.

Where up to now you spurned the truth and sank
Years that appeared too many and a stain:
Three score achieved, secured with pen and ink.

True, waistlines will expand and chests will sink
All despite eating fibres, wholefood grain.
The pension pennies trickle from the bank.

And what of passions, hope, the heartbeat lump
Thudding in throat and voice? All still remain.
Three score achieved, secured with pen and ink.
The pensions pennies trickle from the bank.

Lotte Kramer

LETTERS

"Was Hitler a Marxist?"

GEORGE WATSON ("Was Hitler a Marxist? Reflections about Certain Affinities", *ENCOUNTER*, December 1984) set out in his article to prove the impossible. Although we know a lot about the late Hitler, his years of adolescence and political maturing remain veiled in obscurity. This is especially true about his last years in Vienna and the circumstances of his move to Munich. Thus, inevitably, already Mr Watson's third sentence is wrong. Hitler did not come to Munich to paint, even less to study Marx. The main reason for his leaving Vienna for Munich was that he wanted to dodge the draft in the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Army.

This is not a trivial point since it might have reflected Hitler's incumbent racial views. And it is precisely here where my views on Hitler differ fundamentally from Mr Watson's. Although it appears almost certain—and yet impossible to verify—that Hitler read Marxist literature, the future Nazi dictator cannot be portrayed as a Marxist revolutionary in disguise, which is something Mr Watson has been trying to tell us. On the other hand, I do not hesitate myself to call Hitler a revolutionary; but as such he would be one of a very different kind. Hitlerism and Marxism are not twin brothers, though they have often been lumped together under the common denominator of totalitarianism. The fundamental difference lies here: Hitler was not preaching a class war, but a racial war. The "Aryan" status was hereditary, blood could not be purified by rendering zealous service to the Nazi régime, the stains of "inferior" racial origin could never be rectified by deeds. Only through a long process of breeding could the subsequent generations become more "Nordic."

In contradistinction with Hitlerism, Marxism/Leninism has never been so obsessed with purity of blood and race. Suffice to point out that the majority of Communist leaders came themselves from the "wrong" background with regard to race or class. A very strong example of racism, anti-Semitism, may be occasionally found inside the Soviet Union and other Communist countries, but they are not the product of Marxism. The future Soviet homunculus, the so-called "*homo sovieticus* (*Sovietskyi chelovek*)", an artificial fusion of all races living inside the Soviet Union, is quite a dif-

ferent sort of monster from the Nordic *Übermensch*.

Mr Watson is also confusing the issue of the Nazi-Soviet alliance. Instead of telling us that it was to Rauschning that Hitler had mentioned the possibility of attacking Russia, we are told by Mr Watson that Hitler "had already conceived of a Soviet alliance." Some four years earlier Hitler spoke on the issue of revolution and Soviet alliance with greater clarity to Otto Strasser, if we can rely on the latter's reproduction, from which I would like to quote for our benefit (and I hope also for Mr Watson's):

"There is only one possible kind of revolution, and it is not economic or political or social, but racial. . . . The Nordic race has the right to dominate the world, and that right will be the guiding principle of our foreign policy. That is why any alliance with the Soviet Union, a Slav-Tartar body surmounted by a Jewish head, is out of the question. . . ."

MILAN L. HAUNER

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MR HAUNER MISSES points both big and small. To take the smallest: draft-dodging was not Hitler's motive for coming to Munich in 1913; it was his motive for leaving his native Austria, and the biographical evidence that he came to Munich to paint is abundant. Nor was I arguing that he was at any time in his life "a Marxist revolutionary in disguise." "Hitler was never a Marxist, as Mussolini once was", I wrote, adding that the millions who were convinced of his anti-Marxism in the 1930s were, in my view, "right to be convinced", as he had long since rejected Marxism as old-fashioned and over-cautious. But he was profoundly and indispensably influenced by Marxism, and there is nothing unusual about being profoundly influenced by a doctrine one rejects.

Marxist-Leninist interest in blood and race is something Mr Hauner dismisses on grounds he still has to make clear. To clarify them, he would need to explain away Engels's article on the Hungarian struggle in Marx's journal the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1849, openly advocating multiple genocide—as well as racial dogmas in Marx's later writings; an insistence by early 20th-century socialists like H. G. Wells and Havelock Ellis on racial extermination and the killing of incurables on socialist grounds; and Stalin's applause for the genocidal manifesto of 1849 in his *Foundations of Leninism* in 1924. (I

quoted some of these in my article.)

Most of us were brought up to believe that Marxism is about class and Fascism about race, and my article was designed to show that, for whatever reason, we were misinformed. That simplistic contrast could only survive an ignorance of the texts. And there is plenty of such ignorance. Marxists are often disinclined to read the writings of Marx and Engels; but among their opponents that disinclination is harder to explain, and I suggest it smacks of obstinacy or laziness. A prejudice as deep-ingrained as the Class/Race contrast between Communism and Fascism is unlikely to yield to a single article, like mine, or to a single book. So my advice here is of a sort you would expect from a working literary historian. Do not imagine you know what the most famous books have said before reading them through; and never depend on the handbook summaries of commentators. Read the original texts to the last page, and pay attention to what they say. What they say may surprise you—it is not what we were brought up to believe. And what Marx and Engels said in 1849, what their English admirers echoed, and what Stalin applauded in 1924, was this:

"Until its complete extermination or loss of national status, this racial trash always turns into the most fanatical bearer there is of counter-revolution, and remains that. . . . The next world war will cause not only reactionary classes and dynasties but entire reactionary peoples to disappear from the earth. And that, too, is progress."

With Marx's endorsement, then, Engels publicly called racial extermination "progress": a highly Hitlerian sentiment. Mr Hauner has not yet addressed himself to this crucial passage or to Stalin's approving gloss on it.

GEORGE WATSON

*St John's College
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Eco's Rose

I HAVE just read Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* followed by his article in *ENCOUNTER* ("Reflections on *The Name of the Rose*", April 1985), an experience akin to reading Hindemith on music after listening to Hindemith. The credentials seem impeccable: glittering erudition, the esoteric skills of linguistic analysis, and much more.

Sadly, the possession of such gifts is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the creation of a masterpiece. Eco's *Rose* is a hybrid, alternating descriptive passages, which betray their heavily researched origins, with passages of narrative. (Eco knows

this, as he knows everything else, and speaks of his "arias and recitatives.") Nowhere is there a fusion of scholarship and poetic imagination to create a seamless whole such as one finds in, say, Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian* (1974), a work which gently imposes its authority upon the delighted reader and breathes life into a vanished world.

The only thing short-winded about Professor Eco is his name. We choke on

Letters

his words and his words about words, on what can or cannot now be said. In a ludicrous paragraph we discover that post-modern man in wooing "a very cultivated woman" cannot say "I love you madly", without the rider: "as Barbara Cartland would put it." To crush such an insect, the truly cultivated woman needs but two words.

PETER DUNSMORE

London

"Karl Popper & the Jazz Age"

PROFESSOR STOVE SEEMS quite right to point out that philosophies owe something to the social circumstances in which they arise, and that even an abstract philosophy like Popper's is no exception. But his explanation of Popper's philosophy as a product of the "Jazz Age"—the "key" to which, he says, is the idea of "reversal"—and of *horror victorianum*—is not very helpful. When I think of the variety of ideas and personalities found in the years immediately following the First World War in Europe I find it difficult to credit to all of them a desire to "reverse" things in general. In the ordinary sense of the word, to "reverse" something means to cause it to move or stand in an *opposite* direction. Perhaps Stove means by "reversal" any change in direction or position, up or down, backwards or forwards. But in either case how is this metaphor to be applied to *ideas*? It seems to me that anything new might somehow be explained as a reversal of some sort. Stove's explanation of the Jazz Age is the kind of explanation—unclear, more obscure than what it is meant to explain—that made people endorse Popper's ideas on falsifiability.

With his "key" to the Jazz Age, Stove goes on to attribute to the Jazz Age philosopher of science a desire to "reverse" the "commonplaces" of his subject. This radical reversal, he thinks, is impossible; and he seems to believe that psychology is needed to explain why anyone would try to do it. "In the old commonplaces of the philosophy of science there is much truth, and scarcely any falsity", Stove writes—although he does not give any evidence for this conservative claim, which seems to me an astonishing exaggeration. He goes on to say of these "commonplaces" that

"someone who wishes, as Popper wished, merely to *reverse* them all is doomed from the outset. He will simply be wrong on the main issues, and his wish is nothing more than a young man's adolescent urge to

escape the burdens of adult knowledge and responsibilities" (p.74).

But what exactly does Stove mean by saying that Popper wished to reverse *all* the commonplaces of the philosophy of science (or that he had a "compulsion to turn upside-down every single commonplace which he found standing in the old philosophy of science")? What kind of commonplace is Stove referring to? In fact, many of the early views of Popper were commonplaces. He held that the aim of science is the truth. This is not a reversal but a reaffirmation of a commonplace. His notion of a scientific law was a sophisticated version of things said by Hume and Kant. His conception of scientific explanation as a deductive subsumption of events and laws by other laws of a "higher order" is a development of Aristotle, and it reaffirmed the view of explanation found in the work of Morris R. Cohen, among others. Popper's interpretation of quantum theory ran against Nils Bohr's fashionable "reversal" of Einstein's "objective" interpretation of the theory. Popper's conception of the methods of the social sciences as fundamentally the same as those of the natural sciences was a commonplace of the Enlightenment. It is simply not true that Popper wished to reverse *all* of the commonplaces of the philosophy of science. He wished to reject *induction*—something other philosophers had tried before him, but without the benefit of his provocative literary style or his persistence—and his rejection of *some* commonplaces in the philosophy of science was the result of his views on induction.

I ALSO FIND IT hard to accept Stove's view that Popper's "shocking reversals of received ideas were greedily taken up by an entire generation, almost faster than he could write them down." Closer to the truth, I think, is that Popper's ideas began to be widely recognised only with the acceptance of *The Open*

Society (1945), a popular wartime book which contained an eloquent and easily digested defence of liberty—hardly a reversal of received ideas—together with fierce criticisms of Plato and Hegel that, while sharply expressed, were not unfamiliar to readers of George Grote, R. H. S. Crossman, or Schopenhauer. Stove also writes that "by 1950 he was easily the most influential philosopher of science in the West." This seems another exaggeration. In 1950 positivists like Carnap and Hempel were far more influential than Popper, who had almost no American followers and whose influence was then largely confined to a London coterie.

Stove does not seem to me to always be a reliable expositor of Popper's philosophy. To claim that "Popperite" philosophy "abhors the very idea of scientific success" or that Popper teaches that "we cannot learn anything about the actual universe *even by experience*" seems to me quite wrong. The part played by experience in Popper's scientific method is puzzling, but Stove is here attributing to Popper what is in fact a criticism of his published view, which is that experience is necessary in order to arrive at genuine knowledge of the world. When Stove claims that Popper holds that "one theory is better than another, other things being equal, if it is more easy to refute than the other" he is describing only what Popper thinks makes a theory preferable *prior to testing*. He does not mention that Popper also holds that a theory can be "better" than another by virtue of having passed empirical tests, i.e. failed efforts to falsify it.

ALTHOUGH I FIND MUCH to agree with in Stove's story of how the latent irrationalism in Popper gave rise to, or encouraged, the equivocations of Imre Lakatos and the frank irrationalism of Feyerabend, his explanation of why people have not recognised Popper's irrationalism puzzled me. According to him, Popper and his followers have succumbed to an unconscious "delusion" and committed an "abuse of language" in which they have used the word "knowledge" in a "neutralised" way, thereby cancelling its implications of "success." But this does not seem to me to be right. Popper explicitly claimed that scientific knowledge exists: he wished to distinguish it, however, from what philosophers ordinarily call "knowledge"—justified true belief. According to Popper, scientific knowledge is objective and conjectural (because impossible to either demonstrate logically or to "support" with inductive reasoning). He therefore proposed to use the word "knowledge" to mean "conjectural knowledge." I cannot see how this is an "abuse" of language, or

that he was suffering from a delusion. He deliberately proposed to introduce a new sense of a word so as to distinguish it from other senses. Nor, I think, were careful readers of Popper's work misled by him into thinking he was doing something else.

THE MAIN SOURCE of the irrationalism Stove correctly sees in Popper's work is not an abuse of language, but a denial of facts, especially the fact of induction. Having erroneously rejected not only "Baconian" induction from sense data or other evidently objectionable forms of induction but non-demonstrative reasoning in general, Popper set himself an insoluble problem: to provide a non-inductive (yet empiricist) account of scientific knowledge and how scientists try to seek the truth. His solution to this problem was a self-defeating method.

It is self-defeating because it really makes no sense to engage in science as Popper describes it. If you think of truth as the aim of science, his method seems pointless, for you are blocked at the outset from arriving at any rational claim to truth. If you adopt the method, you have no basis for supposing that your efforts bear in any way on your goal.

In effect, Popper gives the following advice to scientists who have created a hypothesis designed to solve a significant scientific problem: "You must test your idea by trying to falsify it—for induction does not exist, and this is the only 'rational' way of getting closer to the truth. But you must also be aware that your testing, *however prolonged*, will never provide you with a scintilla of rational evidence for thinking that you are advancing toward, or receding from, the truth, the goal of your inquiry. Testing cannot even provide you with good reasons for claiming that your hypothesis is empirically false. No matter how much you test your hypothesis, it will be as conjectural as when you began testing. Nevertheless, you must continue testing (for that is the rational method of science). The only way to break out of testing is to simply conjecture (on no good evidence) that your hypothesis is true or discard it because it contradicts some other hypotheses that you have guessed (on similarly unfounded grounds) are true. . . ."

But since you could have made these guesses without testing at all, it turns out that, for Popper, empirical science is really just a game of deduction, in which we trace the consequences of our ideas and see whether they conflict with the consequences of other ideas but never have any good reasons for thinking any of these ideas are *true*.

Popper's rejection of induction,

which is responsible for this unfortunate aspect of his scientific method, seems to me to explain far more clearly what is wrong with Popper than Stove's "abuses of language" or the desire to "reverse" commonplaces that he says motivated the Jazz Age philosopher of science.

JONATHAN S. LIEBERSON

Center for Policy Studies
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MR LIEBERSON'S last paragraph is essentially right, and on a vital point: Popper's irrationalism about science does indeed stem from his scepticism about induction. I said so myself (on p. 69) though Mr Lieberman appears not to have noticed. Scepticism about induction is not, indeed, the *ultimate* source of the trouble. (As to what that is, see my *Popper and After*.) But it is the immediate source, and the result of it is what Mr Lieberman says it is: science (on Popper's account of it) "is really just a game of deduction." Add: "a game as pointless as it is laborious", and you have got it.

But to say this, about the part which inductive scepticism plays in Popper's philosophy, is not to offer an *alternative* (as Mr Lieberman implies it is) to what I said about Popper's abuses of language. The two things are simply answers to two different questions which I asked, but which Mr Lieberman entirely fails to distinguish. One question was: How did Popper's philosophy of science come to be widely accepted without its irrationalist character being recognised? Another was: What reasoning led Popper to embrace it in the first place?

Mr Lieberman is very mistaken (and very parochial) about the comparative influence, during and since the 1950s, of Popper on the one hand, and of positivists like Hempel and Carnap on the other. It is true and well-known that Popperism signally failed to influence *American philosophers*. But America is not the world, and philosophers are not the only people whom a philosopher hopes to influence. Now to this day, as in the '50s, it is only philosophers who have so much as heard of Carnap or Hempel; and their influence, beyond the circle of philosophers, is almost non-existent. But Popper's name has long been known to the entire educated world, and for at least 30 years he has profoundly influenced, in America as elsewhere, physicists, biologists, psychologists, etc., beyond counting.

The case of biologists is especially important, and grimly amusing as well. For some decades, thousands of biologists, although they are people otherwise sensible enough, have been worrying themselves sick over the news that

their theory of evolution is unfalsifiable. So it is, of course; but anyone of common sense can easily see the way out of the worry. The right moral to draw is not that Evolutionism is unscientific, but that falsifiability is a very poor criterion of what is scientific. But no, the biologists will not hear of that: Popper has said that falsifiability is the mark of science, and therefore it must be so, in spite of sense and reason. And the amusing part is, that it is precisely this faith which has now exposed biologists to the tender mercies of their revitalised Christian tormentors. For Creationism really is (as its adherents claim) no less scientific than Evolutionism, *if falsifiability is made the test of science*. Could there be a more cruel irony than this? Still, we should not waste sympathy on self-inflicted wounds; the biologists asked for trouble, and they got it.

BUT IS THERE NOT, as Hume once wrote, "something in the fate of opinions a little extraordinary"? In the quiet of philosophers' studies, a million bad ideas, apparently as remote as possible from practical life, are born every day, only to die at birth. But occasionally one of the million escapes from the study, and not only lives but, in virtue of some mysterious affinity with the Spirit of the Age, sweeps over the world, and soon affects the most practical questions of life, such as "What biology are children in our schools to be taught?" And yet some people think that philosophy does not matter!

D. C. STOVE

University of Sydney

"Solidarity"

THREE "Solidarity" leaders released in last year's amnesty have been imprisoned again after a patently unfair "trial" in Gdansk. An appeal against the verdicts is to be made to the Warsaw Supreme Court.

Poland is unique in Eastern Europe in processing a large visible opposition. Our (in the West) continual support for, and attention to, this force will help to give courage and hope to all those in the Eastern bloc who want peaceful dissent to become a mentionable possibility.

IRIS MURDOCH
KINGSLEY AMIS
JOHN GRIGG
FRANCIS KING
BRYAN MAGEE

in THE TIMES (London)

AUTHORS

Philip Sidney Jennings has recently launched a new fiction magazine, *Jennings*. He is the editor of *Medieval Legends* (St Martin's Press, N.Y., 1983), and has recently completed a collection of short stories, *Normal Murders*.

Leszek Kolakowski was, until his expulsion from Poland in 1968, Professor of the History of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw. He is a Senior Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and has been Visiting Professor at the Universities of McGill, Yale, California (Berkeley), and Chicago. His principal publications include *Positivist Philosophy* (Penguin, 1972), *Husserl and the Search for Certitude* (Yale, University Press, 1975); the three volumes of *Main Currents of Marxism* (1978), *Religion* (1982), and *Bergson* (1985) are published by Oxford University Press. His contributions to *ENCOUNTER* include "A general Theory of Sovietism" (May 1983), "What is Living (& what is dead) in the Social-Democratic Idea?" (February 1982), and "The Devil in History" (January 1981). His article in this issue is taken from a paper delivered in Castel Gandolfo in August 1981, at a meeting of the board of the Institut für die Wissenschaft vom Menschen.

Michael Charlton, one of Britain's leading broadcasters, is a veteran foreign correspondent for the BBC, and co-author of *Many Reasons Why*, an inquiry into the Viet Nam war (Scolar Press, 1978). His further documentation of the oral history of our times produced his earlier contributions to *ENCOUNTER*: "How (& Why) Britain Lost the Leadership of Europe" (August, September, October 1981), issued as a book by BBC Publications under the title *The Price of Victory* (1983); and "The Eagle & the Small Birds" (June, July-August, September-October 1983), a greatly expanded version of a BBC Radio 4 series covering the period from Yalta to *Solidarity*. His series *The Star Wars History* was recorded for the BBC's Talks and Documentaries department and broadcast on Radio 3.

Laurence Lerner, Professor of English at the University of Sussex, is the author of *The Victorians* (Methuen, 1978), *Love and Marriage* (Edward Arnold, 1979), and *The Literary Imagination* (Harvester Press, 1982). His *Selected Poems* and a novel, *My Grandfather's Grandfather*, were published by Secker & Warburg (1984, 1985).

Jean Hanff Korelitz was born in New York; she was until recently an affiliated student reading English at Clare College, Cambridge. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Durham*, *Other Poetry*, and *Poetry Now*, and her first collection, *The Properties of Breath*, will be published this summer by Taxus Press.

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Alan Besançon is a French historian and author. Among his books translated into English, the latest is *The Intellectual Origins of Leninism* (Blackwell, 1981). His contributions to *ENCOUNTER* include "Theology, Liberated?" (January 1985) and "The End of the Soviet Mirage" (July 1981).

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph*. *Hummingbirds and Hyenas*, a second volume of his satirical sketches of Parliamentary personalities, was published in 1985 by Faber and Faber.

Jean-François Revel writes a column for the Paris journal *Le Point*. His most recently translated work, *How Democracies Perish*, was published last year by Weidenfeld (London) and Doubleday (New York).

Mary Midgley is former Senior Lecturer of Philosophy at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Her books include *Beast and Man* (1979), *Heart and Mind* (1981), *Animals and Why They Matter* (1983), and *Evolution as a Religion* (1985)—all published by Harvester Press—and *Wickedness: A Philosophical Essay* (Routledge, 1984). She is the co-editor of *Women's Choices* (Weidenfeld, 1983). Among her articles in *ENCOUNTER* are "Sex & Personal Identity" (June 1984) and "Duties Concerning Islands" (February 1983).

Michael Thorpe is Professor of English at Mount Allison University, New Brunswick. He is the author of two collections of poetry, *By the Niger* (1969) and *Out of the Storm* (1984), and of critical studies of Siegfried Sassoon, Edmund Blunden, Doris Lessing, V. S. Naipaul and John Fowles, as well as numerous articles and reviews on modern and Commonwealth subjects. His article first took the form of a lecture, delivered last year at the Universities of Cambridge and York.

John Press worked for the British Council from 1946-1980. He has published three volumes of poetry and a number of critical works, of which the latest is *Poets of World War One* (Profile Press, England; Scribner's, New York, 1984).

John Silverlight, formerly an Assistant Editor of *The Observer*, writes the paper's weekly "Words" column; a collection of these pieces on the ebb and flow of English usage was published last year by Macmillan Press. His earlier work, *The Victors' Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War*, was published in 1970 by Barrie & Jenkins.

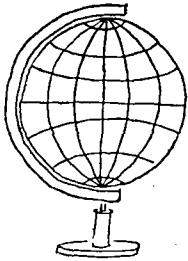
Kenneth Minogue, Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics, is the author of *The Liberal Mind* (1963), *Nationalism* (1967), *The Concept of a University* (1973), and *Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology* (Weidenfeld, 1985).

David Floyd, a distinguished translator from the Russian and Serbo-Croat, was for many years Communist Affairs Correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*; he now writes for the *Daily Mail*. His translation of the second volume of Veljko Mićunović's memoirs, *The Moscow Years, 1969-1971*, is to be published by Collins/Harvill.

Peter Collier and **David Horowitz** are the one-time Editors of *Ramparts*—the magazine which represented, at its purest and most characteristic, the militant "spirit of '68." Their document of disillusion and disenchantment, saying "Goodbye to All That", appeared in the September issue of *ENCOUNTER*. *The Kennedys*, their latest book, was published in 1984 by Secker & Warburg.

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Life & Letters Today



HIGHLY DEVELOPED: *London* A geography lecturer at a northern Polytechnic has sent a pamphlet about a journal produced by something called "The Association for Curriculum Development in Geography." The aims of this journal are:

"to promote an interchange of ideas between students, teachers and researchers in the field of geography.

In particular, geographers need to be in contact with developments in humanistic and radical studies . . .

"The first two issues were concerned with 'Geography for a Multiracial Society', the third examined the global economy, through 'Trade, Aid and Multinationals'."

Subjects dealt with are shown in the pamphlet in the form of slogans on a wall: "Racism in Geography"; "Academic Imperialism"; "Exploration"; "Institutionalised Genocide"; "Sexism and the Food Crisis"; "The Creation of World Poverty"; and, the best of all, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

FAIR COMMENT: *Stratford-on-Avon* Portia's remark concerning the "complexion" of the Prince of Morocco need not have caused any embarrassment because of its apparent racist implications. Portia obviously meant she didn't care for his boastfulness, and certainly wasn't making a snide remark about the colour of his skin. Chaucer says of the Franklin that "of his complexion he was sangwyne", meaning that he had a ruddy face and a cheerful disposition. Shakespeare used the word "complexion" only in the sense of "character."

SUNDAY TIMES

REPRISE: *London* Arthur Marshall's reference to "encore" recalls for me an incident that my old father averred was true. Many years ago, at a smoking concert, the audience applauded and shouted "encore." The singer said that he did not know "Encore" so would sing his last song again.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

WAX ENTHUSE: *Washington, D.C.* Bernard Levin, the British controversialist, has written a mind-enlarging book titled "Enthusiasms." I became enthused while reading it [William Safire writes] which caused me to wonder: Where do I stand on the verb enthuse?

The people at the "Oxford English Dictionary" put it in but they didn't like it. Labeling **enthuse** "colloquial or humorous", they showed their distaste by condemning it as "an ignorant back-formation from 'enthusiasm.'" In the OED Supplement, however, they added a few earlier examples without comment, suggesting this particular back-formation has a long history behind it. The first use spotted was in 1827, by a young Scotsman in the United States, and by 1859 "The Congressional Globe" was reporting, "They are what they call in the country 'enthused'—run mad on the subject" of Cuba.

But from 1870 on, language mavens have not been able to work up any enthusiasm for **enthuse**.

Cut out that squabbling: **Enthuse** is in. Some purists will continue to say "to wax enthusiastic", but those are the sort of people who wax wroth, and Roth is beginning to get a waxy buildup.

NEW YORK TIMES

TV REALITIES: *London* The set for the BBC's new soap opera *East Enders* has been designed to last for 15 years. How many of the tower, deck entry and other blocks of modern flats, built in the real life East End in recent years, can be said to have the same life span, at least in the sense of providing satisfaction to their inhabitants?

We may truly be said to live in a television age when what we see on the screen has more durability than the reality it portrays.

THE TIMES

HAPPENING: *London* Just out is a new book from Shirley Williams (don't all rush), about the impact of tomorrow's technology on work and society called "A Job to Live."

Chapter 21 of the new tome is called "Who Will Make the Decisions" and has an epigraph from W. H. Auden's "Homage to Clio", which is all very well until you read it. Here are the lines:

Between those happenings
that prefigure it,
And those that happen in
its amanuensis,
Occurs the Event, but that
no human wit
Can recognise until all
happening ceases.

Read it backwards, forwards or sideways, it's impossible to see how this is a helpful view of decision-making. So why did she quote it? Silly pseud.

LONDON STANDARD

FLOWER POWER: *Colchester* Plans to build homes at West Mersea, near Colchester, Essex, have been shelved because a rare flower has been found growing on the meadowland site. The "Mersea pea flower" survives at only seven other known places in Britain.

DAILY MAIL



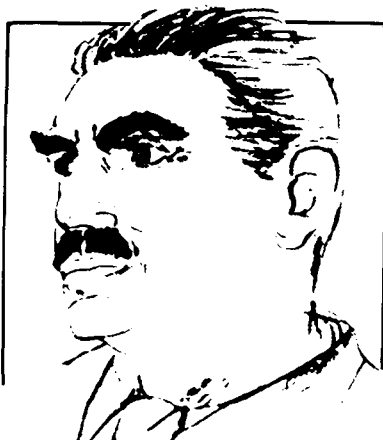
LOGIC: *Los Angeles* According to a poll taken in January for the "Los Angeles Times", two-thirds of Americans say that they believe the Soviet Union cannot be trusted to keep an Arms Control agreement. Nonetheless over 80% favoured an agreement calling for both sides to reduce their stockpiles of nuclear arms, and almost as many favour an agreement to freeze nuclear weapons at current levels.

THE TIMES

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